**Aimee Nezhukumatathil**

**Webinar: Nature as Inspiration and Transformation**

[***World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whalesharks, and Other Astonishments***](https://bookshop.org/books/world-of-wonders-in-praise-of-fireflies-whale-sharks-and-other-astonishments/9781571313652)

**(forthcoming from Milkweed Editions, August 2020)**

Some suggested texts to jolt you into writing short observations or if you feel like you can’t possibly shake despair right now or even if you feel like you can’t focus (these will help. and they will soothe. and smooth. and help remind you of how much life there is yet to live for:

1. The Curious Nature Guide, by Clare Walker Leslie
2. Heating and Cooling, by Beth Ann Fennelly
3. The Park, by John Freeman
4. Black Nature, ed. by Camille Dungy
5. New Poets of Native Nations, ed. by Heid E. Erdrich
6. The Book of Delights, by Ross Gay
7. One Long River of Song, by Brian Doyle
8. Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Wall Kimmerer

* **INVECTIVE:** form of poetry to try to convey rage or frustration or extreme annoyance (with perhaps how humans are treating the planet, what parts of nature you are not fond of, etc) Not every piece of nature writing needs to be an ODE or PRAISE POEM.

(see Diane Lockward’s invective below)

* **HAIBUN**: <https://poets.org/text/more-birds-bees-and-trees-closer-look-writing-haibun>

(my favorite poetic form of all time! It starts with a prose block, “a bouillion cube” of heightened concentrated imagery about a particular location. You could make a haibun as a record of what you did the day before, or from a favorite trip you once took, since most of us are not traveling now (see haibun examples below).

**Invective Against the Bumblebee**

Escapee from a tight cell, yellow-streaked,  
sex-deprived sycophant to a queen,  
you have dug divots in my yard  
and like a squatter trespassed in my garage.

I despise you for you have swooped down  
on my baby boy, harmless on a blanket of lawn,  
his belly plumping through his orange stretch suit,  
yellow hat over the fuzz of his head.  
Though you mistook him for a sunflower,  
I do not exonerate you,  
for he weeps in my arms, trembles, and drools,  
finger swollen like a breakfast sausage.  
Now my son knows pain.  
Now he fears the grass.

Fat-assed insect! Perverse pedagogue!  
Henceforth, may flowers refuse to open for you.  
May cats chase you in the garden.  
I want you shellacked by rain, pecked by shrikes,  
mauled by skunks, paralyzed by early frost.  
May farmers douse your wings with pesticide.  
May you never again taste the nectar  
of purple clover or honeysuckle.  
May you pass by an oak tree just in time  
to be pissed on by a dog.

And tomorrow may you rest on my table  
as I peruse the paper. May you shake  
beneath the scarred face of a serial killer.  
May you be crushed by the morning news.

–by Diane Lockwood, *What Feeds Us*(Wind Publications)

# **Summer Haibun**

To everything, there is a season of parrots. Instead of feathers, we searched the sky for meteors on our last night.  Salamanders use the stars to find their way home. Who knew they could see that far, fix the tiny beads of their eyes on distant arrangements of lights so as to return to wet and wild nests? Our heads tilt up and up and we are careful to never look at each other. You were born on a day of peaches splitting from so much rain and the slick smell of fresh tar and asphalt pushed over a cracked parking lot. You were strong enough—even as a baby—to clutch a fistful of thistle and the sun himself was proud to light up your teeth when they first swelled and pushed up from your gums. And this is how I will always remember you when we are covered up again: by the pale mica flecks on your shoulders. Some thrown there from your own smile. Some from my own teeth. There are not enough jam jars to can this summer sky at night. I want to spread those little meteors on a hunk of still-warm bread this winter. Any trace left on the knife will make a kitchen sink like that evening air

the cool night before  
star showers: so sticky so  
warm so full of light

–by Aimee Nezhukumatathil. Originally published in *Poem-a-Day*, by the Academy of American Poets.