



Extra Hidden Life, Among the Days

Brenda Hillman

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What are poets tempted by? Rhyme. Alliteration. Experimentation. Obscurantism. The list is much longer, but those four lead a great many lesser mortals astray; one of them, painfully so: experimentation. And yet, Brenda Hillman reminds us how surprising and delightful a poet can be when her technical skills are evenly matched with her inventive ideas. The author of nine collections and the winner of the 2014 Griffin Poetry Trust International Poetry Prize, Hillman's *Practical Water* won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award for Poetry.

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*i've studied the soul, know that it exists,
know that it is a construct & an animal mist.
He read existentialist philosophy in the sixties;
thus he quoted Camus & Sartre to his children.
Never gave up on Christianity, the Jehovah kind,
though he liked Jesus just fine. Left home at 15, sent money
back to the farm. Hurt his knee in WWII—in infantry practice
not combat—before most of his men were killed.
It bothered him as we walked. What is the meaning
of experience, was probably
what he meant. Meaning is a glimmer; it leaks from the words.
He wanted to be a writer & writers struggle with this,
some imitate others who have figured out meaning &
few are given credit for what they do, they crave a little
credit but it rarely comes so they go on
writing then become the mists of history. The mists can talk.
That is what i mean by the soul. Our father was
a cheerful person, a bit pompous which was sometimes funny....
Liked to make pronouncements about "mankind." (Mankind
is what accompanies daughters.) Here we are in 1965
before church; my cousin Gloria texted me this. Papa
is about 42. i look like I'm 42 but I'm actually 14.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (January/February 2018)

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