



Imagination's Hope: Four Poems

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Mr. Burns Teaches Ecology

*M*y boots are muddy
from hikes on the dike
with Mr. Burns

who reminds me
that everything
is worth studying:

the blackberry brambles
that horde their purple hearts
with sensible jealousy

the wet brown grass curled
around the sign posts like
malnourished garter snakes


the ducks in the slough
laughing to one another
with their funniest stories.

Mr. Burns keeps his nose
close to the ground as though
he is myopic, but really

he just wants to be near
the earth, catching the story's
scent with his big ears.

Night's Patience

(Press Here for Sound)

orgotten words
rise like turnips
in a moon-tugged field.

Each morning I wake
with a trace of soil
around my lips.


Perhaps in the long
night when I assume
I am lost in sleep

I am really pulling
carrots with my teeth,
calling forgotten words,

knowing always how
nothing is ever lost,
only buried, waiting.

Chant

(Press Here for Sound)

listen to light
but I hear shadows,

not lurking like
disreputable cousins

I hope will not visit,
but haunted breaths,

a Gregorian chant
in muffled mouths filled

with homemade bread spread
in dark molasses,

one more language
I don't know like

Latin or Sanskrit,
a language of confession,

or contemplation,
for calling cirrus clouds

into the lungs,
whispered breaths

I am always trying to hear,
to learn: no light without

shadows, no shadows
without light, always one.

Gravity

(Press Here for Sound)

After another English teachers' conference,
I was tucked inside the Honda for the long
drive home, while my skin ached like
tracing paper to hold October's images.

Another gray day finally seeped into twilight
like a poem's last line, a poet's weary sigh

when at least three dozen sparrows
swept sheer light like an autumn sari

out of the alder hanging over the Honda.
I almost cried a Mary Oliver gasp of delight

when the sparrows, all, or most of them,
shat bullets at my car like B-52 Bombers,

faster than gravity. Always be wary
of the near-sighted view that can't tell

a cloud of sparrows from imagination's hope
for God concealed in the coming night.



Carl Leggo is a poet and professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. His poetry, fiction and essays have been published in many journals. He is the author of several books including: *Growing Up Perpendicular on the Side of a Hill*, *View From My Mother's House*, *Come-By-Chance*, and *Teaching to Wonder: Responding to Poetry in the Secondary Classroom*. Also, he is a coeditor of *Being with A/r/tography* (with Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, and Peter Gouzouasis), and of *Creative Expression, Creative Education* (with Robert Kelly).