

David Benedetti on *Marine Layer*: a review in verse (August 2, 2021)

Marine Layer is a beautiful book.

The title poem is especially intriguing as it is built of short phrases which seem to act as “layers”----

...when they are not connected to each other----
or when they are somehow placed on top of----
or below----each other...

signifying layers of thought...layers of language...
...layers of varying light...
in the layers of the brain...
and layers of the mind...

...something like the marine layers
of San Francisco fog rolling into the Bay...
...in the summertime...
different layers having slightly different colors...
shifting places...
shifting shadows on the different colors of the sea...
shifting temperatures...shifting feelings...

...shifting meanings....but only as much as the
reader is willing to construct out of the fragments...
...of vision...of words...of phrases...

and even then not really holding together...
but floating as layers of clouds...ever changing...
ever looking like something else...
ever becoming something else...

...ever becoming another poem...

...the fluidity is amazing...
in all its amorphous movement...

speaking here...thinking there...
rising up and sinking down...recording this...
hearing that...
seeing something in the layers of clouds...
the play of light on water...
the pastel layers of fog...

and then out of the fog comes the phrase
“They also serve”

followed immediately by the phrase
“Stand and deliver”

---so, like Milton in his blindness,
we must also serve---who only stand and wait...
but must also deliver...

...and see through the ever-changing fog...
to deliver some kind of vagarious meaning...

and then later in the poem...we come to the phrase
“When in the course”
...by itself... sending the reader off----
into thinking-----of human events...

and now we find ourselves making our
declaration of independence....
in all its forms...

...independence from the poet...
...independence from the poem...

and independence from the oppression
of a stable, single meaning to all we know...
all we can sense...
of everything in the world...
as it continually shifts beneath our fingers...
in the salt sea air...
across the lines of the poem...

“World full to bursting”...