

Writing about Writing

I, the dog they call Spot, was about to sing. Autumn
Had come, the walks were freckled with leaves, and a tarnished
Moonlit emptiness crept over the valley floor.
I wanted to climb the poet's hill before the winter settled in;
I wanted to praise the soul. My neighbor told me
Not to waste my time. Already the frost had deepened
And the north wind, trailing the whip of its own scream,
Pressed against the house. "A dog's sublimity is never news,"
He said, "what's another poet in the end?"
And I stood in the midnight valley, watching the great starfields
Flash and flower in the wished-for reaches of heaven.
That's when I, the dog they call Spot, began to sing.

In this poem, Mark Strand takes on the voice of a dog, and he likens the dog barking to the poet writing and reading his own work. He is driven to praise and to "sing" his song, but he is told to "forget it." But, overcome by beauty and by a longing to add his voice, in the end, he does sing.

This poem is, in part, what we call *Ars Poetica*, a poem about writing poetry.

Write a poem in another voice. It can be, like Mark Strand's, a poem about writing poetry, or not. And you can, if you like, include autumn imagery, or not.

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