

### Introduction for Gregory Pardlo

In 2005 Gregory Pardlo published his first collection of poems. He completed his second book of poems in 2010, but suffered through dozen of rejection letters. Gregory Pardlo persevered, and in 2014 a small literary press published his *Digest*. In 2015 he won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for his “clear voiced poems that bring the news from 21<sup>st</sup> Century America, rich with thought, ideas and histories, public and private,” in the second half of his fifth decade, as Robert Frost did 80 years before.

More than that, like Frost’s much different experience growing up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and composing poems in the the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Mr. Pardlo is also “acquainted with the night” from his many journeys and struggles, including with himself, in and outside of academia and mostly self-taught. Mr. Pardlo’s poetic “second sight” thereby grew in perspective, sharpened in focus, and deepened in empathy.

In his 2018 prose memoir “Air Traffic,” Mr. Pardlo said this about composing *and* understanding poems:

Poetry is the best [instrument] to help get out of one’s own head...[I]n order to ‘get’ a poem, you need to find its fulcrum, a tipping point that is rarely obvious. [P]oems [should] have a moment when something shifts...This is the moment of transformation—we call it a volta or ‘turn’...’ [I]t marks the moment when the poem breaks its deepest and most characteristic habit.

If nothing is risked, then there is nothing to draw the poet and reader [or listener] together....[This] moment of change is the *only* poem.

Now, listen up and risk all with Gregory Pardlo. If you hear the “turn,” you will you will feel this “transformative moment,” the one that Frost likened “to a piece of ice on a hot stove [when] the poem must ride on its own melting.”

Please join me in welcoming Gregory Pardlo!

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[After Gregory Pardlo reading]:

We risked all with Gregory Pardlo and heard the turn in his voice, and felt the transformative moment in each of his great poems.

[After Q&A with both poets]: Let’s end this wonderful feast of poetry and food where we began, with another reading by Frost poem. Hear Robert Frost say, “Never Again would Birds’ Song Be the Same.” [play audio recording].