

BLOEDEL RESERVE POETRY PROMPT

PART II: BLUFF/SOUND/RESIDENCE

G.C. Waldrep, December 2020

There are three sets of prompts, keyed to three different locations in the Bloedel landscape: the hill overlooking the bird marsh; the benches on the bluff (behind the Residence, overlooking Puget Sound); and the Zen sand garden, by the Japanese guesthouse.

Directions: complete each instruction, in order. **Do not turn any page until you have completed the instruction(s) on that page.** Be outside when you begin, on-site. **Please take this printout with you, together with a pencil and a pen.**

You may work at one, two, or all three locations. You may skip prompts if they seem too difficult for you (although it's more fun to at least give each a try). You may respond in sentences, prose paragraphs, fragments, or verse—whatever feels natural to you.

The goal of this exercise is to sharpen your attention to both your inner landscape and the outer landscape that is Bloedel, to bring those two landscapes into relation with one another—which is how we actually experience any landscape, all landscape, without always being aware.

(This is part 2 of a 3-part set of prompts, at three locations in the Bloedel landscape. You may complete it on its own, or together with the other two parts.)



II. Bluff/Sound/Residence

Walk down below the Residence and take the trail spur to either of the two benches with a view of the sound—point 17 on the official Bloedel Reserve map.

vii. CITY: You can't (quite) see the city from here. But you can see the city's dream of the city—the suburbs stretching up the sound's eastern rim.

This is one dream the city has—to extend itself. In the space below, describe two OTHER dreams the city has. (2 short stanzas or 2 short paragraphs)

1.

2.



viii. DWELLING: Take six steps beyond the second bench and turn to your right, to face the Residence: this is one idea of what it means *to dwell*, to live in a place.

In one stanza or paragraph, describe your childhood home (or one of them, if you had more than one). You must use the words “whistle” and “pure” as part of your description.

ix. In the previous response, did you mention anything living that was not human? (tree, dog, mosquito, etc.). If not, do so now. (1 short paragraph or stanza)

If you did not mention anything living that was not human in your original response, why do you think you didn't?

x ORCHARD: On the downslope from the house to the bluff once stood, for about sixty years, an apple orchard planted by the Collins family, who also built the house. The last trees were removed in the 1970s.

When you dream about an orchard, what do you see?

If you have never dreamed about an orchard, what *might* you see, if you dreamed about one? (1 stanza/paragraph)

xi. MYTH: You pick a ripe apple from a low branch. You can't see it, because time has made it invisible. But you hold it. Feel its weight. Lift it to your lips.

Do you take a bite? Why or why not?

If you do bite into it, how do you imagine it tastes?

If you do not bite into it, describe the feeling of its skin against your lips. (1 stanza or paragraph)

xii. SOUND: Listen to the faint sound of waves collapsing against the shore. Close your eyes and count, slowly, to 20. Open your eyes.

What was the last sound that woke you, in the night? (1 sentence or phrase)

xiii. BIRDS: Can you hear birdcalls, bird-cries? (Extra points if you can identify the species from the call.)

Once, when you were a child, another child said something that humiliated you. Tell me what that is. (1 paragraph or stanza)

That child is now your age, more or less, somewhere out there—or possibly dead. What is the bird you heard trying to tell that person? (Who is no longer a child, alive or dead.)

IV. By Way of Conclusion

xx. ROOMS: Richard Haag (who was only one of many landscapers and landscape architects the Collinses, Bloedels, and the Reserve have employed over the years) described the parts of the landscape he helped shaped as here “rooms”: the Garden of Planes, the moss garden, the reflection pool, and the bird marsh. He had other rooms he had planned, that were never “built.”

Describe the room where you were born, or—if you have a child—the room in which your child was born.

If you can't do either of these things, then describe a natural “room” *you* would build here, at Bloedel. (1 paragraph)

xxiii. FINALLY: You find out, belatedly, that your great-grandmother, when she died, left you a small wooden box. You receive it in the mail, heavily wrapped in dark paper. Once you've unwrapped the box and opened it, you find inside a single candle, with no note or explanation.

Do you light the candle? If so, what happens when you do?

If you don't light it, what do you do with it, and why? (1-2 stanzas or paragraphs)