

CHRISTOPHER MAHON

Poets for Peace

Come, my friends. 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

The poets have always said it best. They've understood the deepest meanings in the oldest words; they created the vernacular for peace, saw how light shined through every letter of every word that ever contained a message for peace. Let's think of the word *compassion*, and how only the poets understood it could be found in a black shoe worn by a frail woman who crosses the street in the rain. A woman who needs peace as much as anyone else in the world. Let's think of the word *liberty* and ask what we need freedom from or freedom for. Let's be free to march for peace or fight for peace; let's be free from the ignorance of war and hatred. Only the poet can see that liberty begins in silence, as a meditation, really, a long prayer that is not so much for peace but is peace itself. Oh, if only the poets could rule the world! But they will not. They are hidden like flowers. They grow like weeds. They walk the streets of New York City like everyone else, smiling. And so now let's consider the word *beauty*, long a favorite of all the poets who have ever lived. Only the poets

have clearly defined, in words, how beautiful this world is,
even though everyone knows that what they say is true.
Everyone has experienced in his or her own heart the beauty of this world.
The single brightest star in a field of stars at midnight.
The thousand leaves on the birch tree shimmering in the morning light.
The light dancing on a wave. The blue sky. The green grass.
The smell of coffee or magnolia flowers or the wet fur of a dog.
Every little thing in this world is beautiful; we all know it.
Too beautiful to lose. There are ten thousand reasons to wish for peace.
As many reasons as there are words -- like *home* or *soul* or *song*.
But as for the poets, they wish for peace because the world is beautiful.

[This poem is dedicated to and inspired by the work of Paul K.
Chappell.]

CHRISTOPHER MAHON is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and teaches high school English in the Los Angeles Unified School District. His writing has appeared in several literary magazines and newspapers. In 2012, he attended the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Peace Leadership Workshop in Santa Barbara, California.