"And Still She Persisted": Poetry with a Purpose

Run, run, run, trip, fall, cuss, rise, run, run, run.

Such is the process that Senior Lecturer in English, Connolly Ryan, undergoes whenever he writes any poem. Not all of them may ever reach publication, but sometimes, like in the case of “And Still She Persisted,” they do.

If the words “she persisted” sound familiar to you, it’s for a good reason. Professor Ryan’s latest poem, which was published in local media outlet The Valley Advocate, is indeed inspired by Democrat Elizabeth Warren, U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. For those who are unfamiliar with what happened, this is a good summary.

Professor Ryan has been at UMass Amherst for a good twenty years: first as an undergraduate, then as a graduate student, and now as a professor. These days, he primarily teaches the honors seminar, “Ideas That Change the World,” or as he likes to call it: “Gadflies and Whistleblowers and other Hubris-Crushing Heroes and Heroines from Socrates to Malala.”

In this current political climate, which inspired his poem, Professor Ryan believes more than ever in the power of poetry and literature at large. In particular, he believes in poet William Carlos William’s conviction that:

“It is difficult
to get the news from poems
and yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.”

To read Professor Ryan’s brilliant poem, click here.

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