

My Gender Is Neighbor

a poem by Rose Jermusyk

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Characters

NEIGHBOR, someone readily-perceived as femme who is wearing (as part of the entire ensemble) a cardigan and tennis shoes

Scene

NEIGHBOR: I know
we're always told
"Don't judge a book by its cover,"
but I wonder
if you can tell
just by looking at me
with my cardigans and tennis shoes
that my lifelong hero
is the one
the only
the inimitable
Mister Rogers;
the man
who called everyone neighbor,
the neighbor
who ministered to a nation,
the minister

whose ministry was publicly-accessible art;
the art
of being neighborly,
of holding true
while remaining open to others:
Mister Rogers
is my hero,
my mentor,
my ideal,
my aspiration,
my role model,
my fairy godmother,
my patron saint,
my talking cat,
my personal dictionary
for explaining all the things;
for explaining myself,
for explaining
my gender.

My
gender
is
neighbor,
my pronouns
are
neighbor / neighbors / neighborself,
but
if you use
she / hers / herself
I will not fault you
because
the gender of neighbor
is
gender neutrality erring on the side of being neighborly;
so if you err

in my pronouns,
I will err
in neighborliness.

Because

I am
neighbor.

I am
neighborly.

We are
neighbors,
and

today

is

(*sung*) a neighborly day in this beautywood.