

PENSIVE

A Global Journal of
Spirituality & the Arts

Issue 4

VAN BUREN

Founded in 2020, *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality & the Arts* is published by the Center for Spirituality, Dialogue and Service (CSDS) at Northeastern University, a global research university in Boston, Massachusetts, USA with a campus network stretching from London to Vancouver.

Pensive publishes work that deepens the inward life; expresses a range of religious/spiritual/humanist experiences and perspectives; envisions a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world; advances dialogue across difference; and challenges structural oppression in all its forms.

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Cover Art: "New Dawn" by Vian Borchert

April 21st, 2022

Dear Readers,

The world is full of cycles — some abhorrent, some comforting, all of which offer us powerful opportunities to reflect, introspect, learn, and connect. Trouble tends to be much louder than peace, making it easy to notice these cycles through spokes of pain and hardship. As the world rolls on, moments contradict themselves across time and space, and we must learn how to hold these contradictions.

Since we began reading for issue four, these cycles have been revealed in dramatic ways across the globe. Some of us have witnessed a return to “normal life” during the COVID-19 pandemic, while still anticipating the next spike in cases, and then a lull again. For others, there has been no respite. As people of faith and conscience across the globe, we have seen the tragic devastation wrought by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the courageous defense by the Ukrainian people. Millions have offered Ukraine their support. With you we stand, in grief and outrage and a fierce determination that love and justice will have the last word, in Ukraine and in many other too-often ignored places of great suffering and need.

As citizens of a planet plagued by rising tides of nationalism, racism, religious bigotry, and climate peril, we find ourselves both more connected and isolated than ever. Yet time and time again we see light in darkness and hold on to it, remembering that the essential work of spirituality and the arts is to bear unwavering witness to this light.

In each issue of *Pensive* we aim to amplify voices that need to be heard and raise awareness of experiences often overlooked. In these pages you will discover Ukrainian poets alongside writers and artists from many corners of the globe. Here you will find artists crying out in defense of a fragile planet, and seeking spiritual renewal in the natural world. Among the thousands of submissions we reviewed for this issue, we are proud to offer extraordinary work from internationally-known contributors alongside newer, emerging voices. We hope you too will find in this issue work that speaks to your soul, pricks your conscience, and ignites your own sacred imagination. Finally, we hope you will share *Pensive* widely with readers and potential contributors alike, and help us expand this rapidly-growing community that both sees and holds our shared moments of hardship and hope, as we offer one another spiritual solace and solidarity through the arts.

- The *Pensive* Board

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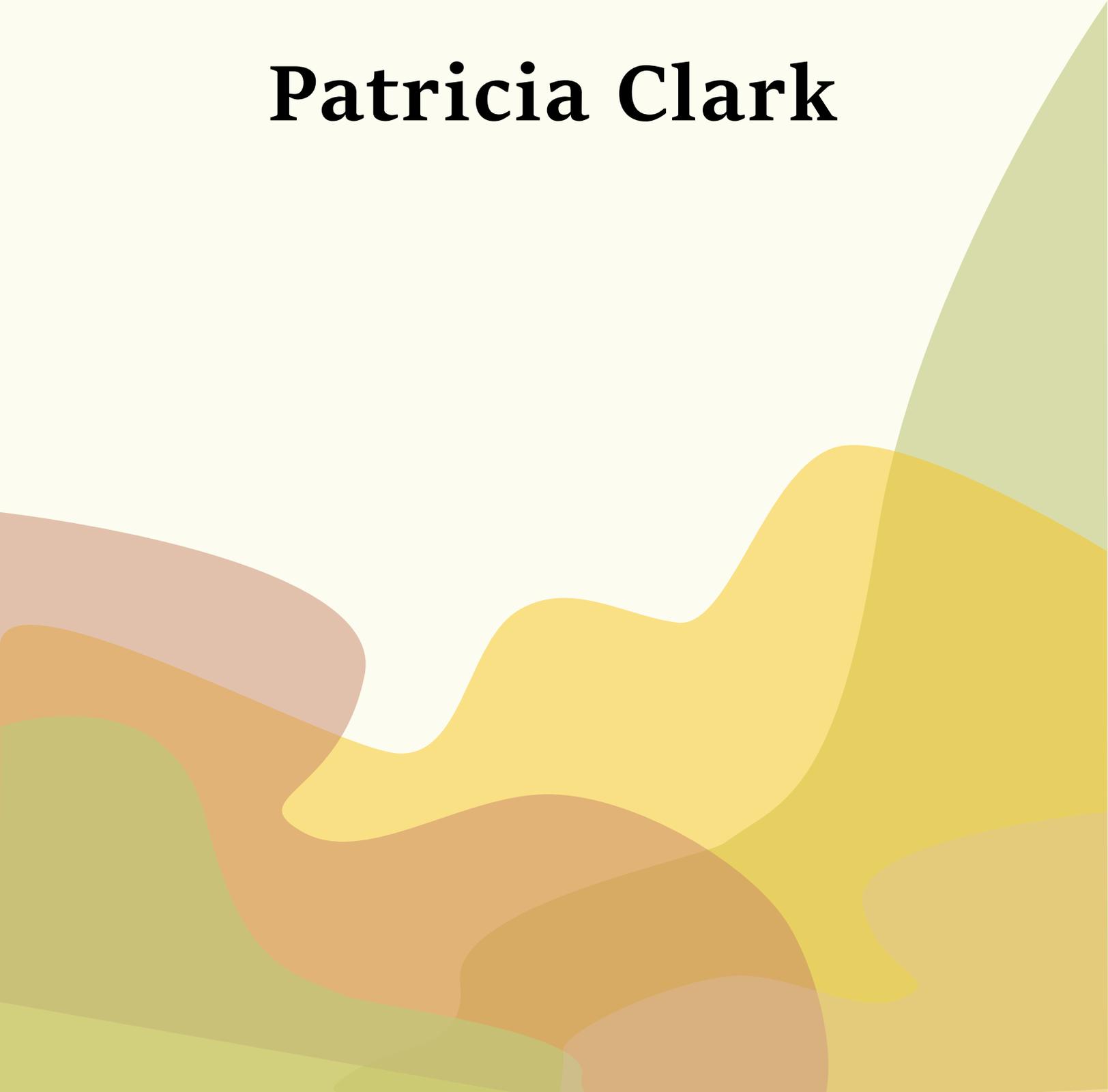
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Patricia Clark



Silver-Tipped Japanese Grass

Pale wheat-colored froth of seed heads
spoke to me as I walked past—
“Please do not worry,” they said.

“Let the weight
bend you over. There will be a time
for rising. Not today.”

I vowed to watch the grasses
through winter days ahead,

noticing how they held on despite
snow and ice, to celebrate

in wind and rain how they flexed,
were jostled and battered, but stayed.
An ice storm bent them flat.

When ice melts, stems and seed heads rising
again, I let wind touch my cheek.
My skin tender, it yields.

Not sculpted from stone, or ice
I join with the grasses.

Higher than the Hills

Luke Armstrong

I went to the hills to find myself and found myself
patiently smiling beneath the tallest tree
on top of the world.

I rose to greet myself and became lost in an embrace.
Above an eagle drifted and the wind wandered
through the trees,
their leaves whispering
about the wonders waiting
behind this world.

I took off my heavy bag and watched me unpack it on the forest floor.

"I could have carried less," I said.

But I just smiled back at me and said,
"You are allowed to live the life you have
wandered into.

Just keep coming back to me
when too many joys begin to burden your bag
I will always be waiting for you
to wake and wander outside
and in wonder see yourself as someone worthy
of basking in the light of a thousand stars.

Learn to love all that you carry
and lift each task like the wine of your wedding.
Your spirit married this body for you
to find out that forever is a fragrance that flies
from the flower your heart visits
like a bee making love with the body of life.

As you were learning to live,
life was learning your laughter
and studying your smile for clues of who is the father
of this son begotten by a breath of solar wind
then suckled by the softness of a world
where delicate lives are lived
beneath an ever-changing sky
where oceans travel in clouds
to far away corners
so the children of dreams can chance the dance
of becoming everything beautiful
by losing all fear of taking flight.”

Ivan de Monbrison

Небо серое. The sky is grey.

Небо серое.

Танцует тень на крыше.

Птицы летают, как открытые глаза.

Вчера люди на пляже были похожи на рыб или тюленей.

Лодки шли на юг.

Но на крыше дома, под серым небом,

Тени танцуют

Всегда по кругу.

The sky is grey

A shadow dances on the roof.

Birds fly like open eyes.

Yesterday the people on the beach looked like fish or seals.

The boats went south.

But on the roof of the house, under a gray sky,

The shadows are dancing

Always in a circle.

Shaker vision art, sacred picture, some damage

Kelley White

*to edges, paper, pen & ink with watercolor highlights:
a wheel of star, resembling a mill wheel turned by feathers;
dove, with wings outstretched, above two smaller doves,
labelled 'Love' and 'Wisdom,' each with a feather (or quill pen)
clutched in its beak; additional elements include figures
representing a lamp and fountain, clock with feathers as hands,
a lamb, lion, trumpet and harp; with border of scrolls and 'received'
(non-alphabetic) script, signed 'from Holy Mother Wisdom
Received 5th May 1837, Willbur Woodson, Watervliet' **\$120,400***

We are feathers in Sweet Mother's breath
Rose petals on the wind
We shall know only earthbound death
Be reborn without Sin

So come ye as a newborn Lamb
Unto the Lion's fold
And lay ye down in sweet sweet grass
Drink from Her fountain's gold

Now bow your head and walk beneath
Dear Mother's Holy Bower
And ye shall see the wonders of
Her Garden all in Flower

Oh treasure up these Heav'nly things
To thy Soul 'twill comfort bring
For through much suffering you must go
'Fore you leave the dark below

Ours is the place of Holy Peace
Blessed by our Mother Wisdom
And here Her Lamp shall never cease
To light us to Her true pure Heav'nly Kingdom

So lift ye Sisters voices all
Come Brothers to The Dance
We shall be Mother's Righteous Flock
And find the Light at last

Conciencia Plena

Juan Ramon Jimenez

*Tu me llevas, conciencia plena, deseante dios,
por todo el mundo.*

*En este mar tercero,
casi oigo tu voz; tu voz del viento
ocupante total del movimiento;
de los colores, de las luces
eternos y marinos.*

*Tu voz de fuego blanco
en la totalidad del agua, el barco, el cielo,
lineando las rutas con delicia,
grabandome con fuljido mi orbita segura
de cuerpo negro
con el diamante lucido en su dentro.*

I am from

Julie Dickson

I am from sea spray,
sprinkled over sand and rocks
leaving behind a salty brine
that dries to pale powder.

I am from the sky,
my wings spread wide
gliding across a cloudless day,
my sharp eyes survey the ground.

I am from snow,
a frozen memory buried deep
under an icy existence
waiting for spring thaw to release me.

I am from the dirt,
Earth Mother of all life,
plants and trees emerge as sprouts,
animals born from my womb.

I am from everywhere
and also from nowhere,
the space of my universe is vast,
I dwell in every shadow.

Heavenly Garden

Emily Updegraff

The tulip magnolia belongs in heaven,
eternally in its magical prime, with petals
of crushed raspberry stirred into cream,
tender cups of delight.

Likewise, downy apple blossoms
dolloped like meringue on branches
that lately shivered in wet nakedness
signify abundant life.

In a heaven of endless spring,
sepals, forever turgid and green,
never decay into the wasted underside
of an apple. Petals, never shed,
do not curl their darkening edges
into the grass and disappear.
The god of that heaven has
no more need of apples.

Earthly trees live day by day,
exhaling away as light
spins air into beads of sugar,
pulling taut the skin of plums.
But not forever.
They cannot keep their flowers
or fruit; preservation is not
life eternal.

Death in eternity, is it a possibility?
It may needs be, because God is
no magician, but a gardener.



seeds of beauty

James Redfern

we create our worlds piece by piece,
act by act, word by word, thought by thought.

fate dictates the station of our birth.
we create the rest over time.

we carry in our souls the seeds of beauty;
our lives are meant to grow these seeds.

a seed tossed into a dung pile
can flourish, even thrive.

just so, seeds of beauty can grow,
flourish, and thrive in the suffering of life.

nurture the saplings that sprout from these seeds,
growing up through the dung and suffering of life.



life, unfolding

Kathryn Sadakierski

translucent like paper lanterns in the early moonrise of golden autumn
the knobby knuckles of the mountain range
raised like a hand fisted, about to knock on a door
longing to open to the light
the creped fingers of an ancient
soul who feels less with the padded, faded print-swirled tips of thumbs
and more with the heart
that understands the beat of life in all
that loves
the touch of starlight
in the spiraling ripples of a quiet pond
through which, in the sleepy morning dayglow
fast ascending,
we see silhouettes, shadows of ourselves
always growing with each sleep,
each metamorphosis from learning to knowing
and being,
we realize what it means
to truly be part of life unfolding,
reaching outward,
not hiding inside the petals
of the past,
but peeking out
to the new stars
that blink over a horizon
gentle with the dappled palette
of an upward-looking flower,
a forward-looking heart.

Dead Letter Drop

Pamela Cranston

*"I find letters from God dropped in the street and
every one is signed..."*

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself"

God writes so seldom now, I think
He uses lemon juice for ink.

His notes are coded ciphers hid in hollow rocks.
I'm lucky if I can find one in St. James Park.

I've given up on God's game of hide and seek,
much less deciphering his sideways scrawl.

Did he stop writing for a reason?
We never had a fight or falling out.

Or did we stop talking, like an old couple
of fifty years eating their meals in silence?

What of those letters from our first love affair?
The prayers so hot, each one immolated itself?

Each one bleeding with longing and desire
and a devouring need to disappear in the other.

Doesn't that count for something?
Or were those prayers just seeds

meant to be buried then die in the ground
so an invisible tree could take root

each branch bearing green leaves that flame
with their own words of love before they die?



City Solitude

Huda Khwaja

Take a walk through the city alone
with your thoughts as your company,
your hands enveloped in your own pockets for warmth.
Feel the cold wind whip down the street as you turn the corner
and soak in the feeling of insignificance
next to the tall buildings, the busy streets,
and the crowds jostling around you,
none seeing you there.
Smile when you realize it doesn't matter if they did see you.
Tonight, you don't need them to.

Tonight, your heart warms itself with *Dhikr*, praises of Allah,
whispered under your breath,
lifted to the skies by merit of their mention of Him,
ever-heard by He who Hears all.
As the flashing city lights against the night sky,
the gratitude rushes through you,
a light stronger than any strobe.
Because tonight you get to know the power of surrender to Allah,
the power of independence from any human,
the power of being alone but not feeling alone,
for not everyone gets to experience it at all.

Why I Still Read Hesse

Wayne-Daniel Berard

It is 1966, summer. I am two months away from entering Franciscan minor seminary. I'd recently received its summer reading list in the mail. Surprised that God's academy would yet deal in such secular-seeming pursuits, I remember choosing one of the titles with the fewest pages: *Siddhartha*, by Hermann Hesse.

Thin, black and silver New Directions paperback in hand, I repaired to the pine grove just down the street and a million miles away from my house. This was my sanctuary, where a fourteen-year-old chubby, intellectual, unathletic and

thoroughly spiritual boy could feel safe from the bullies and belonginglessness of his world. Rows of pines stood in unerring lines, planted, legend had it, by a local tribal chief. I settled myself upon the layers of pine sod and opened the book.

And then my life changed forever.

I soon found I was not alone in this. Hesse spoke to my peers and I as no other writer could, and introduced an entire generation to the wondrous, intimate, salvific relationship of disciplined reader to literary, spiritual master. I inhaled *Siddhartha*;

by the time I left that grove I was more certain than ever of my imminent departure on sacred quest, and infinitely, even eagerly, less bound to any ultimate destination.

As another searing voice would soon assert irresistibly to young listeners:

*The road is filled with homeless souls,
Every woman, child, and man,
Who have no idea where they will go,
But they'll help you if they can.*

Hesse himself seemed deeply, irresistibly drawn to long journeys, walking usually south through Switzerland and into Italy. A medley of poems and watercolors, *Wandering*, and a truncated excursion to India both closely preceded his creation of *Siddhartha*.

In 1970, as I was entering college, Kurt Vonnegut published his essay *Why They Read Hesse*. In it he asserts that “America teemed with people who were homesick in bitter-sweet ways,” and that Hesse’s were the most profound books about homelessness ever written.

Characters such as Hesse’s Goldmund, Emil Sinclair, Harry Haller, and Joseph Knecht showed us the sacredness of the homeless soul, if not its necessity, and

the nobility of vocation in helping without attachment to outcome. And for me and so many, the epitome of this form of holiness and calling was Siddhartha, the Brahmin’s son, who became the ferryman of seekers.

Put succinctly, Siddhartha leaves his father’s home as a young man, accompanied by his adoring friend, Govinda. He is looking for Truth, for Meaning, for the Real, not as ideas to hold, but as a conscious and constantly lived experience. He begins his quest with the Samanas, the extreme ascetics of Hinduism; Siddhartha soon masters all their techniques, but what he seeks still illudes him. His homeless wandering continues; he immerses himself in world after world, that of studying with the Buddha, of sexual ecstasy, of success in business and the decadence of wealth. In all of these he is kind and compassionate to those he meets, but none of it fills the soul. Most significantly he comes to reject all teachings of any sort as inadequate to encompass that which he seeks:

“That is why I am going my way -- not to seek another doctrine, for I know there is none, but to leave all doctrines and teachers and to reach my goal alone.”

Finally, in despair, he flees his latest dwelling place and prepares to throw himself into a river. Suspended just above his leap, he hears with the ear of the heart the voice of the river whispering the sacred word, OM, that syllable that speaks to and from the innate Oneness of all things. Siddhartha lives, and takes up residence with an elderly ferryman, clearly a spiritual master. The novel ends with Govinda, who had stayed behind as a Buddhist monk, reencountering his old friend at the ferry. He begs Siddhartha to give him some hint into the enlightenment that he sees emanating from his person, but that Govinda himself had never found.

What follows still quickens my pulse to think about, fifty-five years after my first reading it. It bears quoting here in full:

“Give me something to help me on my way, Siddhartha. My path is often hard and dark.”

“Bent down to me!” he whispered quietly in Govinda’s ear. “Bend down to me! Like this, even closer! Very close! Kiss my forehead, Govinda!”

But while Govinda with astonishment, and yet drawn by great love and expectation,

obeyed his words, bent down closely to him and touched his forehead with his lips, something miraculous happened to him. While his thoughts were still dwelling on Siddhartha’s wondrous words, while he was still struggling in vain and with reluctance to think away time, to imagine Nirvana and Samsara as one, while even a certain contempt for the words of his friend was fighting in him against an immense love and veneration, this happened to him:

He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha, instead he saw other faces, many, a long sequence, a flowing river of faces, of hundreds, of thousands, which all came and disappeared, and yet all seemed to be there simultaneously, which all constantly changed and renewed themselves, and which were still all Siddhartha. He saw the face of a fish, a carp, with an infinitely painfully opened mouth, the face of a dying fish, with fading eyes--he saw the face of a new-born child, red and full of wrinkles, distorted from crying--he saw the face of a murderer, he saw him plunging a knife into the body of another person--he saw, in the same second, this criminal in bondage, kneeling and his head being chopped off by the executioner with one blow of his sword-

-he saw the bodies of men and women, naked in positions and cramps of frenzied love--he saw corpses stretched out, motionless, cold, void--he saw the heads of animals, of boars, of crocodiles, of elephants, of bulls, of birds--he saw gods, saw Krishna, saw Agni--he saw all of these figures and faces in a thousand relationships with one another, each one helping the other, loving it, hating it, destroying it, giving re-birth to it, each one was a will to die, a passionately painful confession of transitoriness, and yet none of them died, each one only transformed, was always re-born, received evermore a new face, without any time having passed between the one and the other face--and all of these figures and faces rested, flowed, generated themselves, floated along and merged with each other, and they were all constantly covered by something thin, without individuality of its own, but yet existing, like a thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, a shell or mold or mask of water, and this mask was smiling, and this mask was Siddhartha's smiling face, which he, Govinda, in this very same moment touched with his lips. And, Govinda saw it like this, this smile of the mask, this smile of oneness above the flowing forms, this smile of simultaneousness above the thousand

births and deaths, this smile of Siddhartha was precisely the same, was precisely of the same kind as the quiet, delicate, impenetrable, perhaps benevolent, perhaps mocking, wise, thousand-fold smile of Gotama, the Buddha, as he had seen it himself with great respect a hundred times. Like this, Govinda knew, the perfected ones are smiling.

Hesse writes these words in 1922. His *Steppenwolf* appears five years later; *Narcissus and Goldmund* three years beyond that. He continues to write prolifically until *The Glass Bead Game*, his opus major and final full-length book, published in 1943. 2021 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of his Nobel Prize. But none of Hesse's works would ever again express the sense of spiritual quest fulfilled, of enlightenment achieved like *Siddhartha*. Quite the contrary, in fact.

Hesse's other novels are filled with quests dashed, hopes barely realized, if at all. Though scattered with triumphs, they read largely like a testimony to the ultimate futility of achieving any final fulfillment. *Steppenwolf's* Harry Haller is a loner and social misanthrope who despises the modern world; *Goldmund of Narcissus and Goldmund* dies without

truly fulfilling his search for the Divine Feminine and his own. And Joseph Knecht, the Master of *The Glass Bead Game*, barely breaks free of its bonds before perishing in a (perhaps suicidal) drowning incident.

Nowhere do we see repeated or expanded upon that transitoriness transformed, that mocking, thousand-fold smile of the perfected ones.

And that, I must profess, is why I still read Hesse, why that *New Directions* paperback has never left my bookbag (and now my Kindle), even to today, in my sixty-ninth year.

There is a sort of an irascibility in Hesse's work; its flavor to the literary palette always seems to be a sweet-and-sour. No matter what positive, even glorious experiences occur for his wandering characters (and they do), there is always a purposeful dissonance sounding in the midst of it. I attempted to capture this in a poem.

With Herman Hesse in sunny Italy

In the Bergamo
I found him
playing rickety guitar
with companion walkers

in a cobbled square
I smiled
offered my hand,
and tuned the one
sour string
he smiled, too,
made the namaste
he had brought from
his two weeks in India
 looking back
over my shoulder
I saw him rejoin
them deftly
re-untuning

And yet, there remains that ascendant, all-inclusive scene of Govinda's vision, embracing sweet and sour, love and death, the human, the animal, and the divine, even as it transcends them all. What are we – what was I – to make of the seeming singularity of *Siddhartha*, the only unqualified triumph of the soul in a canon of spiritual near-misses and their consequence?

Five and a half decades of wandering with Hesse and of the going on my own way – from Franciscan seminary to Student Mobilization Committee, from treadmill activism to learning meditation in a seaside hermitage, from an adoption search that revealed my

own Jewishness to Torah as a spiritual path and Jewish Renewal, from darkest divorce to discovering Great Love and remarriage, from invitation to interfaith Peace Chaplaincy to a summoning by spontaneous past-lives and shamanic experiences – all of these have led me to one certain conclusion: that Hesse’s description of that enlightenment is too true, too accurate to be anything but real.

I have come to believe in my core that *Siddhartha* is, in its core, not a work of fiction, but the transmission of a lived experience: the enlightenment of Hermann Hesse himself.

What this seminal book in my life, combined with all of Hesse’s other work, has shown to me is the reality of many lives, many incarnations, in the one life we lead. When I reread the list of flowing faces in Govinda’s vision, I see my own: the fourteen-year-old seminarian, the college activist, the lost orphan and the rediscovered Jew, the divorcee and the at-last beloved, the interfaith clergyperson, the past-life Essene. The writer. The poet. Lives which all have, and will all come and disappear, and yet all seem to be there simultaneously, which all constantly change and renew themselves, and which are still all Wayne-Daniel.

I have come to see the literary, spiritual master to whom I disciplined myself all those years ago as a sort of amnesiac bodhisattva by choice who, relatively early in his life and career, kissed the OM, the oneness of all characters in the river’s pages, but who never piously saccharined that experience into the same quest-story, told over and over again. Rather, it would seem he subsumed his own enlightenment, steadfastly presenting literary masterpieces of the sweet *and* the sour, leading each reader to the dock of the ferry. That much help he would give to every woman, child, and man. Beyond that, he knew, one’s way, from life-to-life within one life, must, of necessity, be often hard and dark.

Vonnegut was right (of course!) Hesse was and remains the most profound of writers on homelessness, the bitter and the sweet, and on the necessity of one for the other in the on-going river called home.

I still read Hesse; my on-going lives are not over yet! And neither, I hope, is my companioning on the road of souls, although, thanks to *Siddhartha*, I do feel I have an idea where I will go, indebted to all Hesse’s works for unvarnished insight into the process of the getting there:

why I support summer reading

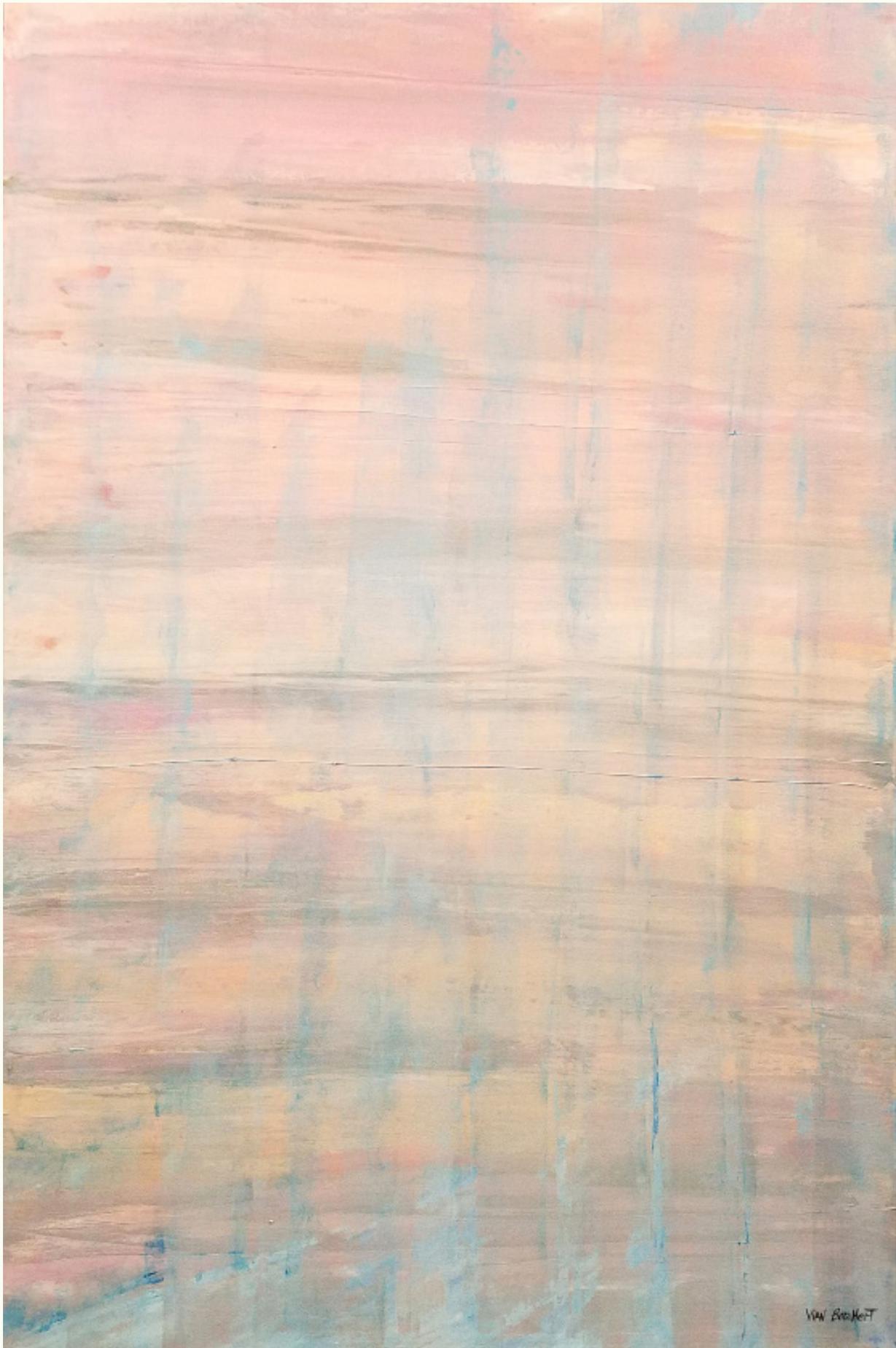
lean forward.

his fourteen-year-old steps
walk him from his house
in torturetown then left
into the hidden pine grove
perfectly straight rows
chief cohannet may have
actually planted for all
he knows he sits where
needles give only cushion
and does his summer reading
Siddhartha New Directions
1966 black cover silver
Buddha

he steps out of the grove
a samana having left everything
he walks up the years to his
courtesan to the unplating of
all that surety

he wanders to
his ferryman teaching centering
prayer in a backyard hermitage
on the south shore finally he
dientortures himself by
this river his sixty-nine-year
silver soul opens a page.

kiss the forehead of this poem.



New Dawn

Vian Borchert

What the Buddha Shared While Gardening in My Backyard

Carolyn Martin

I hate gloves, too. The feel of dirt is bliss.

Consider every weed bodhi-full. It's the nature of Nature.

When the sounds of wind surf through your Douglas firs, stop to hear the rhythms of the universe.

What's my favorite image for rebirth? One flame, many candles. Silence? A raindrop hidden in a ginkgo leaf. History? A braided river twisting, weaving, winding through marshes, along valleys, over waterfalls searching for the ocean it calls home.

Don't bring a frantic urgency into your yard. It drowns out mindfulness and agitates the sangha of excellent flying friends.

One gladiola bulb planted mindfully is worth more than a thousand seeds scattered by the wind. Although, with all due respect, the wind has a wisdom of its own.

Do no harm to moles and slugs. They have work to do.

After a rain, tread lightly on your lawn. Earthworms are right-sizing in the sun.

Boredom can't exist if you are curious. Become the ripple in a pond searching for its stone of origin.

Even fog has a clarity of its own.

Uprooting someone's peace of mind is as harmful as uprooting their flowering plum.

Of course, you can read the *Farmer's Almanac* or any garden book, but experience will dictate volumes of your own.

Communion

Nadine Ellsworth-Moran

My eyes follow the bread.
The soft disc of flour and water
we carried with us to this place—

A pathetic trickle of the Jordan,
food wrappers and scraps of plastic
mix with dirt and water.

Why here, now, with this bread?

We draw together.
I stand to the right of the celebrant
to receive the first unspoiled taste
but the bread passes another way

around the circle, hand to hand—
those hands!
awash in unseen contagion,
polluted hands, like these waters.

What holiness lives here?

Turned, broken, spoiled,
this bread is placed in my hands
to take and eat in the company of saints.

Saints?

No, not set apart but stitched together,
A ragged bread, a ragged people.

Do this in remembrance of me.

As I stand just outside her door,
pull on blue latex gloves,
set a mask over my mouth,
I remember.

I can see her fingers, blackened
by necrosis, eating her alive.
I see the bread in her ruined hands
open to receive it.

This, too, is the body of Christ.

The Point

Denise Thompson-Slaughter

It is here
on this point and no other—
where insanity gives way to infinity—
that the angel has
danced.

It is here
where infirmity gives way to impunity
that a woman who has never seen or heard angels
can't stop writing about them,
spirit squeezing into pen
and trying to break out the point
to leave at least a trace
of ectoplasmic blood on the
page.

It is here,
just here,
that she loses the point
each
time.

Black Bean Sutra

Laurence Musgrove

This morning, after cleaning, boiling, and
Resting the beans, I put them in a crockpot
With diced tomatoes, garlic, cumin, oregano,
Onion, paprika, and lots and lots of salt.
I set the temperature on low and planned to
Forget about them for the next five hours.
I then called the Buddha to see if he had
Any plans for dinner, "Salad, beans, rice?"

"Why, yes!" he said, "That sounds good to me.
I always enjoy a dish cooked long and slow.
There's also a tasty lesson in preparing
A meal like this from the simplest recipe.
You and I, like everyone else, arrive into
This world with the same basic ingredients
Slow-cooked in the evolution of our species.
Then, we are slow-cooked again in the family
We inherit, in the places we live, and in the
Habits we learn: such a rich and delicious stew.
It's also the reason for the difficulties we face
When we want to adjust the recipe, when we
No longer enjoy the dishes we've been served,
Those thick juices and flavors we simmer in:
It's so hard to start over, to keep everything tender."

Lesson One in Chinese Character/s: a Bilinguacultural Poem about *Heart*

Yuan Changming

感: /gan/ perception takes place
when an ax breaks something on the heart

闷: /men/ depressed whenever your heart is
shut behind a door

忌: /ji/ jealousy implies
there being one's self only in the heart

悲: /bei/ sorrow comes
from the negation of the heart

惑: /huo/ confusion occurs
when there are too many an 'or' over the heart

忠: /zhong/ loyalty remains
as long as the heart is kept right at the center

耻: /chi/ shame is the feel
you get when your ear conflicts with your heart

怒: /nu/ anger influxes when slavery
rises from above the heart

愁: /chou/ worry thickens as autumn
sits high on your heart

忍: /ren/ to tolerate is to bear a knife
straightly above your heart

忘: /wang/ forgetting happens
when there's death on heart

意: /yi/ meaning is defined as
a sound over the heart

思: /si/ thought takes place
within the field of heart

恩: /en/ kindness is
a reliance on the heart

Juice Ex Machina

Mark Stucky

When wine ran out at the wedding in Cana,
why did Mary request and expect Jesus
(who seemed slightly exasperated)
to act as an on-demand, divine liquor store?

Yet, gallons of fermented juice of grapes
appeared where only water had been.
But sermons are rarely preached about all that wine,
and the awkward subject gets changed when mentioned.

This first miracle by Jesus still seems odd.
It wasn't a person's healing from a dreadful condition.
It wasn't a life-changing event for those in dire need.
It was just a favor to his mom
to avoid family embarrassment.

"Mary, save miracles for crucial things,"
we might self-righteously judge.
We, of course, never pray petty requests.
So we can feel smug
over such undeserved
and unconditional compassion.

Mark 10:14

MEH

she tells us she's been struggling
because her eldest child
has come out as bisexual, and
is changing the name she gave him

(we hear that her eldest child has grown
into who he has always been
and has gifted himself with a name
to show her, the world, who

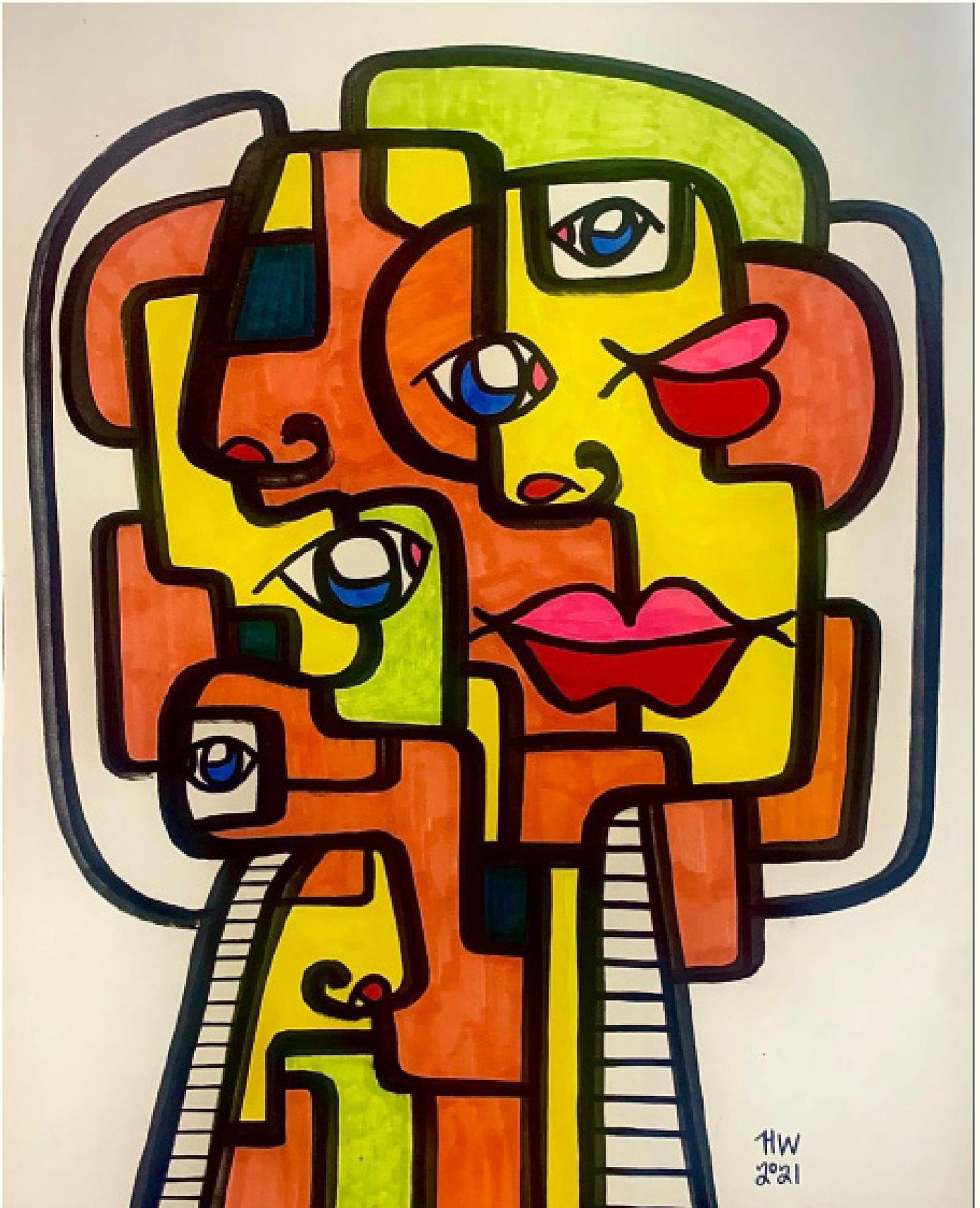
he must always be—forever
loving the image of God in all
the world). she says he showed her
a tattoo healing inside his wrist

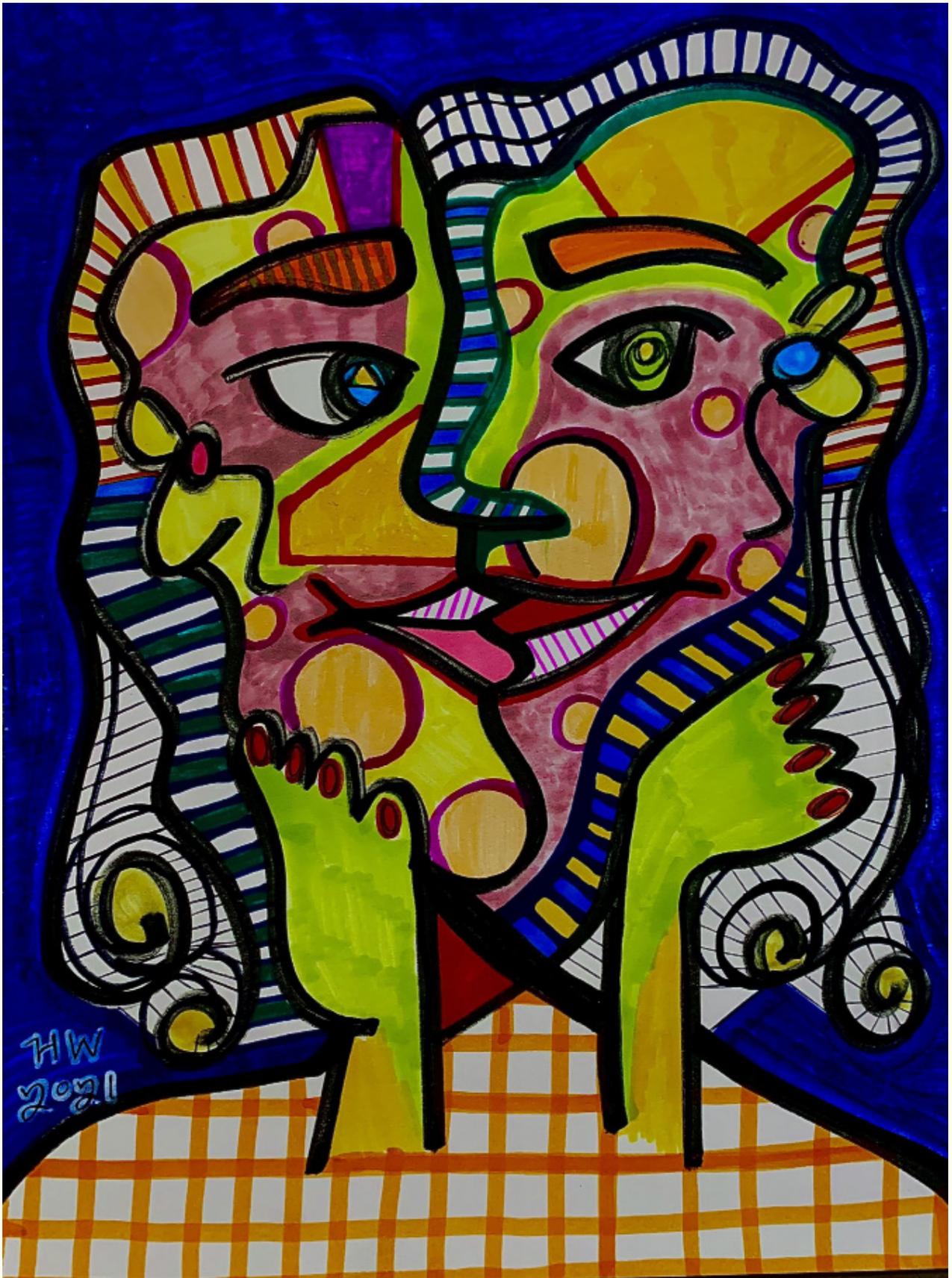
(an image of God's love for all).
but she worries—she questions,
grabbing his tattooed wrist—
whether his baptism will hold.

full of worry, she questions if
God will know him by his new name,
will uphold his baptism, will
still recognize him as His own

(we hear God whispering the name
given in secret before the world
could recognize its own stillness,
stretching arms to enfold His child).

Hanna Wright





Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Koan

Leslie Schultz

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

1. Silence.
2. An ear of wheat buffeted by wind.
3. A windshield wiper, back and forth, temporary glimpses.
4. More silence.
5. Distress. A pesky gnat.
6. Disaster. Help! Frantic gestures.
7. In a field of snow,
a small fire has just been lit.
It is your only chance. Do not
let it go out.

8. Pounding, hammering silence.
9. Air. A whooshing sound. A door closing.
10. We need each other.
Pat-a-cake!
What is a mother
without a child?
11. The body's symmetry
is a glyph of balance.
We need to be whole.
12. The earth waves at the moon.
13. Laughter. Deep, healing laughter.

The Speed of Light is a Constant

Seems like a good time, the right time,
for a prayer.

Not a chest-heaving, life-leaving prayer.
Just a prayer.

A long, nobody done me wrong, patient
kind of prayer.

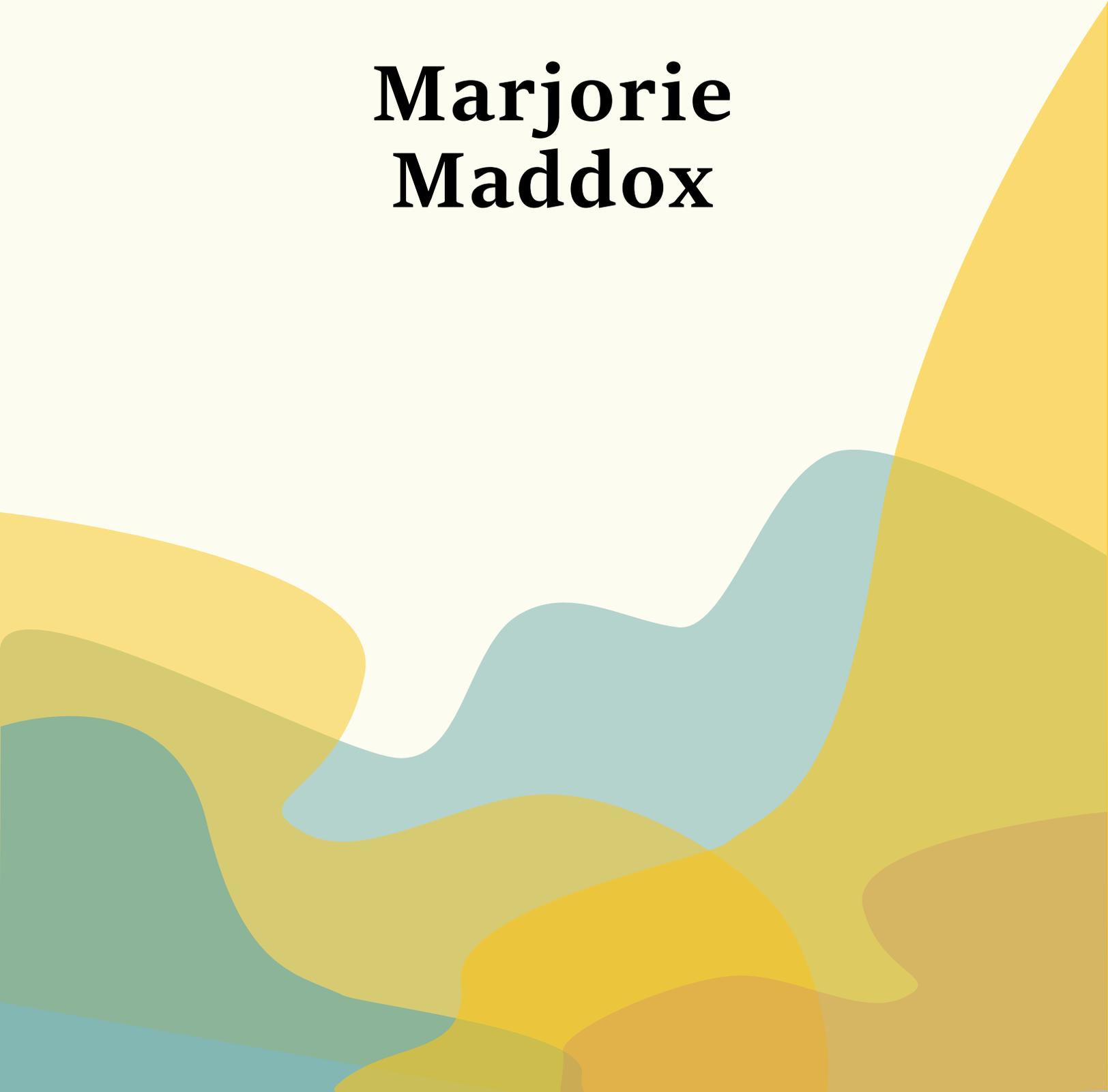
A continuing prayer, one without Amen
at the end.

A prayer to slip my mind into the pocket
of the sun.



Mike Wilson

Marjorie Maddox



Pandora's Boxes

Box 1: Water

This is the box of sense, of no sense, of cliffs
calling for gulls slick with our carelessness,
of sands piled high with the lies we recycle,
then toss aside into a sea murky with—not
misgiving, just nonchalance—into the open
mouths of fish swallowing our wish list of
death whole and wholly. Whale me away to
that shore before Jonah, that sea beside Eden,
that pre-human beauty forgotten beneath heaps
of plastic hubris, beneath this discarded
cardboard: addressed, sent, never received.
The sun is hot and sinking. Do it now.

Message in a Bottle

Your
tear-
made
waves
cannot
carry any
scrawled pleas,
cannot ride your tides
of self-inflicted sorrow,
ebbing away tomorrow,
the under-tow relentless,
unforgiving. The dead—
starfish, clam, octopus,
shark—echo the sea's
salty message more
clearly. "Please!"

Box 2: Land

Drill this: worm's muddy tunnel awash
with rain; crawlspace of wild rose; ancient
oak's roots tethering dirt to sun, mole's
dank mine for the blind; hare's hideaway;
ant's underpass; cicada's subway; shrew's
shaft; termite's pit; badger's labyrinth; prairie
dog's spa; tarantula's turf; cool sand caves
for desert tortoise; rough passage to elsewhere
for ferret, fox, chipmunk; ritual popping spot
for dapper Punxsatawny Phil in frayed top hat
prophesying as frantic Whistle Pig his earth's
blueprint of doom: hail, drought, sleet, tsunami,
pipeline, blizzard, 120 degrees in the shade,
fracking, seismic shift, negative 40 degrees
in the sun, oil, earthquake, greenhouse gas—
no spring in sight, no sight at this site at all.

Flare

O
say can
you see
its flag-
red, fraying
patriotic
tail, sputtering
amidst the smog? Its
muted explosion
tangled in low-lying clouds
saturated with acid?

Box 3: Air

Monoxide, carbon; dioxide, sulfur;
exhausts of CFCs and nitrogen oxides;
sunlight exploding hydrocarbons; *Oh
where did we pack those stylish gas
masks?* Light trespass; over-illumi-
nation; astronomical interference. *Keep
all orifices closed as long as possible.*
Scarred landforms, municipal solid
waste stacked up in junk heaps, rubber
burning. A cornucopia of chemicals
overflowing in this valley of vapors,
this mountainside of crackling warnings,
No, *don't inhale*, everything rotten
under this too-hot, too-cold sun, under
this *there* that is there, that is here, that is.

Boo Mangiacotti

Cereal

the world is ending,
and i am sitting in my living room, eating cheerios.
the chewing is just a little bit too loud to hear the TV
i am very concerned about that.
the sky is falling as i tie my shoelaces,
i never learned how to do it without bunny ears.
the sun is burning out, as i check my mail,
it's mostly spam.
i read about nuclear winter as i shop for a new sweater.
i love layers but i've never been fond of the chill.
i buckle my seatbelt while the earthquakes because safety is my number one priority.
nothing makes sense anymore,
as i read the back of the cereal box.
i hear death feels like a nice, long sleep, but i think worms will eat my skin.
i'm afraid that being forgotten isn't good enough.
i dont want to feel the bugs with me underground.
i am so afraid of decay.
and i'm out of milk.
i should probably go fix that.

Ravens

Sydney Lea

At dawn, I awakened to ravens, flopping among our window trees like sloppily schooled fish. As they got louder and louder, my annoyance turned to anger.

Geese make a din too when they lift from our pond and head for the river, as they do each morning in the warmer months, almost exactly at 7:00. At least that's a civilized hour, though, and they're out of earshot in a matter of moments. What's more, their flight formation looks military-smart. I know I'm an anthropomorphizing fool, but there was something about the raggedness of the ravens' congregation, both in woods and air, that partly impelled my intemperate scream this morning: *Will*

you get out of here? The flock moved perhaps thirty yards north and resumed its chorus.

By now, the morning has mercifully gone cloudy. I can't detect the pine-pollen clouds falling like yellow snow, another thing I'd found to fume at, dust coating our windows and getting into our lungs, so heavy has it been this year.

So it's come down to the birds, who are still at it these hours later, protracting my ugly mood.

Suddenly, speaking of birds, the least expected notion touches me like the

brush of a wing, though I suppose I'm thinking of less rowdy birds than these. I'm a man who attributes such moments to God, as I understand that vast entity— which is to say very slightly. But comprehension is not, at least for me, an issue here.

In any case, I abruptly soften. I reason that the higher-pitched and more insistent squalls out there come from this year's young as the mother birds coax them to start life on their own; and I recall what it can be to have shrieking children, how existence can feel downright futile as you seek to guide them in what you consider measured tones— and what somebody else might hear quite otherwise.

I understand that my fury's not with a few irritating scavengers, anyhow, but with the world we creatures share, which teems with torture, racism, imprisonment, starvation, and of course with children's protests. Meek or loud, those complaints are too often met with abuse, or almost worse, neglect.

And here I've been complaining about some birds' racket and reacting with my own violence, no matter that it's internal. God save me. Yes.

As if my self-rebuke had charmed them, the ravens, young and grown, wheel off. They scale our ridge, leaving behind them a mild breeze among trees. It rises and ebbs in a rhythm, putting me in mind of peaceful breathing.

All The Gathering Light

Patricia Peters

The emails come in from three different regions sometime after 1am. This means whether I wake up at 4:30 (can't sleep, too much on my mind), 6:30 (grabbing two cold hard boiled eggs, rushing to work) or 8:30 (Saturday mornings, kids playing Lego quietly for an hour already), the real estate emails are there waiting. The emails appear as faithfully as my questions of *Where to next?*

Why bother looking at emails every day when there isn't a job yet? Why bother looking at real estate in three different locations when not one of those places is sure?

It might be a compulsion.

It might be coping.

Every day, pictures arrive in my inbox. New houses appear. The best ones eventually disappear—*This property is no longer available.*

I started looking at houses when summer cracked the skies open like a can of blue paint. Some too-expensive houses flaunted pools and reclined deck chairs. Then for a few nostalgic weeks, the trees flamed red and porches glistened wet with autumn rain. In the yards, leaves gathered in corners like cattle before a storm. Now there is a skiff of snow in some regions, in others, yards are smothered. There is no way of knowing what is underneath.

It might be compulsion. It might be coping.

Every house has a few guarantees. Every home has a front and a back door, at least one kitchen, cupboards to store dishes in. There will be bedrooms and bathrooms and roofs, stairs.

Every house in my price range has a quirk. This week, two newer houses had open concept closets in the master suites, no closet doors. Shelves pecked with a million holes to be versatile, customizable. And they look fine, decorative even since the shelves are currently empty and there are three crisp white shirts hung on three white hangers. But my husband would not dutifully fold his jeans so the hems are tucked in and the folded edges face out, neatly. He would not cross the arms of his sweaters so they do not fall free. The legs and arms would be like so many wild animals scattering. One galley kitchen had white-washed boards running the length of the walls hung where cupboards normally go, every planked inch packed with canisters of coffee and tea and spices and bottles of oil. All the insides out. Some other houses had orange cupboards or green countertops or a different kind of flooring for each and every room—pink carpet, green carpet, little striped wooden squares going off in every direction.

This might be a personality test. What does it tell you if I want grey planked floors seamlessly tying rooms

together, many windowpanes divided in neat squares edged thick with white? Three bedrooms up and an extra down, two bathrooms or more, a fenced yard, a silver chandelier, a quiet corner for an upholstered writing chair, some sprawling trees, a garage? What does it say if I want a house laced with sunlight, soft colours training, cathedral ceilings, spotless? The view itself doesn't matter: waterfront or ravine-backing or blinds opening to the Prairie gleaming like God's bald head.

This might be a test of character. I try on houses in my mind. Who might I be here? Is there space for their Lego, my dumbbells, room for three piles of homework on the kitchen island?

If it is a character test, I come up short on seeing the good in what is long-standing. I don't want to gut that bathroom. There is no room for guests in that kitchen. I don't want that roof falling in on my head. How much easier to picture myself in a place that is scrubbed new, where the insulation is already held in by sheets of drywall.

The things to date about houses that I don't understand:

A deck with many short planks painted white, blue, purple, randomly patterned

Neighbours who have old toilets and bookshelves on the lawn

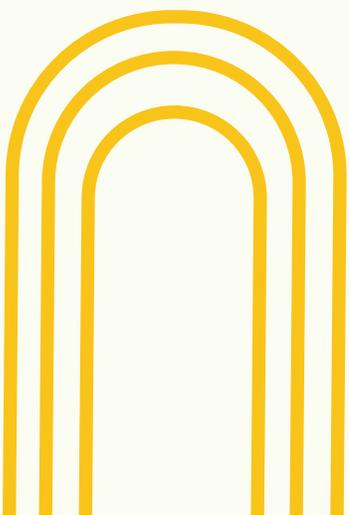


Carpet in the bathroom
Carpet in the kitchen
Orange paint
A dead goose hanging from the roof
“Tree in the front lawn not included
with sale of the house”

It is not difficult to tell which properties have been staged and professionally photographed. The textured blankets draped over dining room chairs, the pillows crisply karate-chopped in the middle, the three perfectly potted herbs on the kitchen counter, a stuffed dog in a stuffed dog bed beside the glass table set with four towers of dishes for four invisible people. I fall for it every time.

The dark pictures are another story, with their cluttered counter tops and loose doorknobs. I don't want to see myself there in the shadows, there with wobbling knobs, in basements where the webs hang thick. I want life brightly lit, minimally cluttered. I want things beautiful, reliable, safe.

Some mornings I'm not thinking
real estate. I'm
thinking about
Antonio. He lives
in the park across
the street from my
church, sleeps
in the subway. I
wake up early
and pull my bare



arm back under the blanket in from the chill and wonder where he is sleeping, how cold he might be. I've started looking at single-room rentals—how much they cost per month. The rooms I can afford are mostly asking for a “roomie,” *una señorita*. Most want long-term contracts signed and I am thinking about the three months of cold, about how long we can help for, about how long it is healthy to help. We can't really keep him in our current apartment, three boys already sharing one bedroom, us already working from the couch or the bed. But in my apartment, the afternoon sunlight spills in slanted through the wall of windows and outside my bedroom window there is a tree. Here the furniture is softly grey, dressed with pillows and area rugs in plush ruby and teal and a bold elephant palate-painted as tall as a man hangs on the wall. Where in this would we put a homeless man the age of my father?

I think about safety. I've had friends leave the country because of trusting too much and their kids ended up assaulted. Privacy. Without a room for him, he would reside in all our public spaces where we often work, where we rest.

Leaves are swirling now, gathering chill. Is my heart losing square footage? Is some moral roof falling in? I don't have a room for him, although I technically



have space. How exactly can I build a life on hoping for more space for myself when I don't know how to make enough space for someone else first?

Antonio comes over once a week so he can shower and have a hot meal. I choose unpretentious menus with easily chewed entrees to accommodate his rotting bottom teeth. The first week we bought new socks, underwear, jeans, two shirts, a jacket, a touque. Every week, we wash the plastic bag of clothing not on Antonio's back. As the week wears on, the stain under his chin pools larger around the neck of his jacket, the smell of urine wafts sooner.

Antonio is a concert pianist. He often worked in hotels. He asks us about the cold in our country, about igloos, about our educational system. He doesn't complain about his life, though sometimes he falls in the subway. Those times I carefully help him in and out of his shirt. He flushes with embarrassment. My Spanish soothes him, like a child and I keep my eyes low. He listens patiently to my youngest explain how Optimus Prime transforms. My oldest son teaches him to shoot a Lego rifle. Every week he takes a 40-minute shower. The second week he borrowed my husband's electric razor and shaved off his Santa beard. "I liked him better with the beard," one of the boys whispered in English. "People

look at me with a beard and think I'm homeless," he commented in Spanish as if he understood, small upper lip pursed, then he laughed. My littlest son climbed in his lap declaring, "You are my best friend." Antonio blinked, moving his arms around the little child as though feeling was coming back to limbs long pricked with sleep.

Antonio has lost track of his family. Most have left Mexico. "I don't know if my sisters are alive," he says. "I'd like to help them if they need anything." *But how can he help, I wonder, when he can't help himself?* He carried their addresses in his breast pocket for years until one day the police robbed him and took everything he had, even those dog-eared papers. "They shouldn't call themselves police," my youngest son grumbled. "They should call themselves crooks."

Paracaistas are crooks too, I found out today from Marina. Once a week, Marina comes and helps clean the apartment, scrubbing the gas stove, washing the outside of the floor-to-ceiling windows with a cloth draped over a broom, standing on a stool to reach the microwave. Something is always going wrong with her

family; every week the amount we pay her seems to increase.

Her daughter's family was living in an apartment. There was some illegality about the landlady's papers that was being sorted out. One day while they and the landlady were out, the lawyer "helping" her case paid some drug addicts to smash in the windows and doors. Sixteen chihuahuas jumped past the broken glass and ran down the street. The group of men, armed with knives, took up residence in the apartment block, chaining the doors shut. They are still there, holding hostage all of the possessions inside. This is occurring with greater frequency in certain neighbourhoods. The men call themselves *paracaistas* and they "parachute" in, invading homes and refusing to leave. Since there are legal issues with the apartment building, the police are paid off and do nothing to protect the rightful inhabitants. The hope is that the tenants and landlords will lose both heart and patience and relinquish the property and then the profits will be split between the lawyers and the addicts.

Marina handles it calmly. "I don't know why these things are happening but at least they can move in with me now and not stay on the street. At least the children weren't alone in the apartment

then because who knows how that would have turned out."

Her grandchildren are my children's age. Even their school bags are being held hostage. I went through my children's closets and pulled out pajamas, shirts, sweaters, some pants. I forgot to ask what size the mother wore. I forgot to send food. I forgot about the emails.

I forgot that what you think about depends on where you are looking. Like driving down a long prairie road, unconsciously steering toward your gaze. Stores will tell us "Not enough!" but our closets have extras. Emails tell us "Not enough!" but we have more than most.

I forgot doors are for opening, not for smashing in or even for admiring. I forgot that families are for the lonely, homes for the living, not for staging and shooting in soft lights only.

This remembering is a parachute slowly opening, suspending the descent.

I forgot I'd like to be a house, extending as wide as arms, indefinitely, in the direction of the park benches, front porch washed by seasons into gleaming pools, where every tree stands ignited and the light itself is a whole world gathering.



Facing It

Jack Bordnick

Acceptance

Robbie Gamble

takes an effort
to ease into the change
the way a photo negative
shows you the path into the image—
light transforming light to hold the darkness
and dark making way for brilliance to stream on through

Semantics

C.T Holte

Anything can be verbed.
So . . . what if “God”
was a verb rather than a noun?
People would have to stop trying
to define him, or her, or it, or them,
and arguing over what, and when, and where,
and how, and whether still,
and other ineffables,
and concede not only the ineffability
but the impracticality of it all.

What would be left is the memory
that whatever the noun was supposed to signify
was a Good thing,
or things,
or being,
or beings,
and that—
with god now verbed—
actions that were good and loving
would be god-ing,
and there would be
as many god-ings as there are huggings
and kissings
and meals fed to the hungry
and bandages put on wounds;
and there would always be
plenty of opportunities
to god your neighbor.

the fourth body

Mary Anne Rojas

locate your feet
and hands
let it go
do this multiple times
visit the back of the heart
where a curve of light exist
in the shape of a hum
carved out of the shadow
of your tongue
watch the earth repeat itself
like a child asking questions
without understanding boundaries
arriving to the fate that we are
looking at ourselves
the way the night stares back
at you from there to here
re-remembering that
mirrors correlate
to distance similar to
the way a body of water has its
recurring destination-

i've been here before
and i will come again
like that one time I went
to a mountain in another life
I had a different body
microscopic and buoyant
no face, no word, just a
withdrawing silhouette
with a soul for language
that placed me here now
and like the earth's crust
we are brittle and
we can break easily
discontinue from this terrain
making a concept out of flesh and skin
forgetting that there is another sun
that we do not talk about where
travelers of the body observe from
unafraid to translate the world
into another body

In My Dreams I Call

Tatiana Retivov

*

Branches dripping with
Red guelder-rose berries.
What are they for?

More bitter than
Mountain ash, to be
Crushed with sugar

And frozen for the flu
Season, only after
The first frost has passed.

Later, in midsummer,
Black elderberry
Succumbs to its fate

As a veritable immune booster,
Gummy this, gummy that.
Anti-oxidants in a concoction.

*

In my dreams I call
Or try to call you
On some ancient phone
To tell you that
Your vote counted!
The scoundrel is gone.

But I cannot ever
Connect or reach you.
On the screen
An ancient telex
Streams endlessly.
Its cursor – a quixotic

Knight errant. Last
Night Navalny returned
And I tried again to call.
It was an old Motorola,
Not yet smart, its push buttons
Stubbornly slow to deliver.

Lines of text scroll
Aimlessly in search
Of a recipient. I try again
To tell you that Le Putain
Has run amok in his
Underground bunker.

But to no avail, you
Are not to be disturbed.
The silence is numbing.
Still, we connect, muted
We play tag with
Each other in my dreams.

The Names They Gave Us

Amie Adams

There is a place in northwest Iowa called Island Grove and in that place there is a lake. Carved long ago by a retreating glacier, the lake is small by most standards. A person can canoe from its shore to the small island near its center in a matter of minutes. Oaks with summer leaves a shade darker than the lake itself fringe the shoreline and crowd the island. At the lake's southern end, its waters mingle with a slough which flows into another lake. Together, these three bodies of water—separated by narrow isthmuses—form a lopsided circle, enclosing the grove at their center as if it

were itself an island. A long time ago, no one knows exactly when, the lake was given the name Mud.

Today, that lake is called a different name—Ingham. How often do any of us consider the significance of a name? We seldom realize that each name is a riddle, and invitation, a doorway. This story, like many others from this continent, is a story of loss, but it is also a story about the sacred act of naming: about names discovered, given, taken, and recovered.

Our story begins with the end of the ice. Thousands of years ago, a retreating

glacier rumbled over the land, leaving behind rocky hills and bowl-shaped valleys where ice blocks stranded and melted into drift lakes, pools of clear water cradled in thick deposits of soil. Nearby, fertile bottomlands filled with flora and became sloughs, marshes, and peat bogs. Coniferous forests and wildflower meadows sprouted from the warming soil like the first signs of spring. As the land woke from its long hibernation, mammoth, mastodon, musk ox, moose, ground sloth, giant beaver, bear, and bison returned to roam Island Grove. Humans followed. We can only wonder if they gave the place a name.

Again, thousands of years passed. Ice Age animals went extinct; temperatures rose; the Holocene began. As the climate warmed, the forests left by way of the glaciers and retreated northward, leaving isolated timber groves near waterways. These became a refuges in changing world. In those days, the people migrated throughout the year, hunting bison, elk, and deer. In early spring, hunters drove herds of bison over the eastern embankment of the larger of the lakes in Island Grove. Stampeding over the edge, the animals fell through the ice, drowning in an explosion of shaggy hair and falling

hooves as the ice ruptured and cracked like gunshots. When all was quiet—still as midwinter—their warm bodies were hauled out of the water and butchered on the shore. The hunters stripped away hides, separating meat from bone as steam rose from bloodied flesh. Season after season the hunt came with the first blooms of bloodroot, and the lakebed is still littered with bison bones.

I found the arrowhead at the base of a tree on the island and squatted to pluck it from the loose soil. From stem to point, its stout, gray body was as long as the gap between my knuckles and barely thicker than a wing on a pinecone. To study an archeological record is to grope for the edge of the past, reaching for a time before written language and history collided, but holding the fragile point momentarily dissolved the barrier between past and present. I held in between my fingers a piece of the Woodland period; a time when stone projectiles were bound to arrows with bison sinew. The stone's triangular body tapered to a delicate stem characteristic of the Lost Island cluster, a group of projectile points named for a lake a day's walk southwest from Island Grove. These points are a local variant of the

popular Adena style that originated far to the east in the Ohio River Valley. What flung the technique out to Island Grove? No one can say with certainty; though stones were not the only arrivals from the east.

The people of gray snow revered islands. According to their stories, in the beginning the earth was flat, surrounded by water on all sides, and all people lived together on an island in the far east. As time passed, people left the island to seek good land, dividing themselves into tribes and traveling across the water in skin boats. When one group stopped on a sandbar at the headwaters of a large river, some people say a great wind blew dust on them. From these headwaters, the tribe divided and spread as tributaries flow, coursing farther west. It has been written by other people that a journey which began in the forests of the Great Lakes ended at edge of what would become Iowa Territory. Those people say that when the people of gray snow reached the fertile valley of the Iowa River, “they halted and cried out *loway! loway!* which in their language means *this is the place!*” When I read this story in a history book published over a century ago, I wanted it to be true. The

story had a certain beauty to it—the idea that a name could affirm the rightness of a place.

When these newcomers arrived near Island Grove the Dakota living there called them *ayuhwa*, the sleepy ones. Overhearing this word, French trappers called them *aiouez*. However, the people of gray snow continued to call themselves *baxoje*, although some people said their name meant dust noses. By their English name was given to the expanse of land between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, its origin in the gray snows of the northeast had been forgotten.

In the mid-1830s, the United States government dispatched French explorer Joseph Nicollet to survey and map its newly-acquired land, named after the people whom they sought to remove. The task would take Nicollet years to complete, and during his travels he would find the topography so unfamiliar to him that his native tongue would fail to express it. In his 1839 report, Nicollet wrote that he borrowed from indigenous languages and invented new phrases when making his map because neither French nor English contained words to accurately describe the terrain. “The

first Frenchmen who explored it, and the British and Americans who followed them, were so forcibly impressed with this novelty in appearance of the topography, that they employed new names to designate it," the document reads. When Nicollet arrived in a region of lakes and forested hills surrounded by a vast prairie, he was enchanted. Leaving formality aside, he wrote, "In attempting a faint description of this beautiful country, my thoughts and feelings are painfully brought back to it. Let me be permitted, as a relief, to transcribe [it]." On September 28, 1838, Nicollet traveled south along the Blue Earth River, crossed what is now the Minnesota-Iowa border, and camped at Okamanpeedan Lake twenty miles north of Island Grove. That night, Nicollet sketched the lake in his journal along with a route continuing southwest. I can decipher from the entry that Nicollet noted *Okamanpidan* (as he spelled it) meant *little heron*¹. That day, he named the region Undine.

Borrowed from German mythology, undines were a race of female water spirits who inhabited brooks, rivers, and lakes. In Nicollet's retelling, Undine was the daughter of a prince and the niece

1 Okamanpeedan is a Dakota name, meaning "nesting place of the blue heron."

of the mighty Mankato River, which rises in southern Minnesota. She lived in the forest near the Mankato where she was beloved by the water spirits who inhabited the many brooks and rivers. The report reads, "I do not know why I fancied an analogy between the ideal country described in the tale, and that of the one before me; but I involuntarily, as if it were, adopted the name."

When my husband came into my office to coax me away from my computer at midnight, he found me crying. "What are you still doing up?" he asked. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I shrugged.

He leaned over my shoulder and saw the computer screen split between scans of Nicollet's journals and a digitized version of his map.

"What are you doing?"

"Trying to figure out if this French explorer has Island Grove on his map. I've been reading his descriptions of what everything used to look like, and it was all so beautiful. I just wish I could see it like that."

"You should probably get some sleep," he responded.

A week later, I hung a framed print of Nicollet's "A Map of the Hydrological Basin of the Upper Mississippi River"

on my wall. The sinuous contours of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers wind from their headwaters and run parallel to one another down the length of Iowa Territory with surprising accuracy. The interior is carefully marked with tributaries, lakes, and tribal boundaries. I see *Lac o Spirit*, the restless, sacred lake of the Dakota people a day's walk from Island Grove. To its east winds a river marked with three names as it meanders across the map *Inyan Shasha of the Sioux, Moingonan of the Algonkins, Des Moines of the French*. Just beyond the river, the high plateau that Nicollet labeled *mini-akipan-kaduza*, Dakota for "water running to opposite sides" stretches in a half circle. Along this ridge rivers fall away from one another and flow either to the west to join Missouri River or to the east to the Mississippi.

I cross the slight rise of the *mini-akipan-kaduza* and I try to imagine what this mapmaker from two centuries ago saw as I drive west on Highway Nine, which follows the same path as the *Chemin Des Voyageurs*, an old French trade route. Fields of tender, neon green corn and reedy smudges of marshes clip by in my peripheral vision where trappers would have seen oceanic prairie—

interrupted by places the Dakota called *tchan wintah* or, wood islands—extending to the horizon where grass met hazy-bright sky.

Although Nicollet veered west and never caught site of Island Grove, a former member of Nicollet's party named Captain James Allen made an expedition of his own in 1844 and his journals provide us with the place's first written description. During the time of year when monarchs feast on the orange blossoms of butterfly milkweed and compass plants soar taller than a person's head, Allen and his company of dragoon soldiers² departed Fort Dodge, Iowa on foot to begin an eight hundred mile journey northwest. Following the Des Moines River, the men saw herds of elk numbering up to one hundred. They forded clear streams and found one bee tree with good honey. Cicadas must have buzzed feverously in their dreams. For the first week of their journey, the company averaged between ten and fifteen miles a day, marching through big bluestem and prairie cordgrass that soared five feet above their heads. However, as the men traveled further north, the prairie became wet and filled with dense stands of sedges, scouring rushes, and cup plants. Wagons wallowed in mudholes

2 named for the short muskets they carried

and a torrential storm only saturated the ground further. Their progress slowed to six miles. The following two days they remained camped near the lake now known as Five Island Lake.

On August 25, the expedition entered Island Grove and “struck a large grassy slue or prairie stream connecting two lakes.” The men spent the whole day ferrying their supplies across the slough and then pressed on two more miles toward a grove of timber to make camp. Upon reaching the grove, they found a “large irregular glassy lake that seems to belong to a chain or series of small lakes.” Allen’s guide, a man named Jones, said that he knew nothing of the country and had never come so far north. With Allen acting as guide, the men spent another day searching for a passage between the lakes, advancing a total distance of six miles. In frustration, Allen remarked in his journal that “the grass of this country is tall and luxuriant, remarkably so for so high a latitude, but the whole country is good for nothing, except for the seclusion and safety it affords to the numerous waterfowl that are hatched and grown in it.” In Captain Allen’s report to the United States Army, he wrote:

so little was known of the true geography of the country to be

passed over, that it was impossible to define the route beforehand with minute exactness...For the actual route passed over, I must refer to the accompanying map, which will show it more fully and completely than could be made by any other description. The map gives a very correct delineation of the country passed over...perhaps the most accurate on record.

This is a complete exaggeration. Rather, Lieutenant Potter’s map is a merely a crude copy of Nicollet’s riddled with inaccuracies. Most waterways go unnamed, including a chain of lakes branching from the west fork of the Des Moines River, presumably where the expedition became lost. The area surrounding the river is marked with the words *small lakes and low prairies*. These blank spaces look like the empty expanses of ocean on old European maps. They are terra incognita, uncharted oceans of grass.

It astounds me to imagine Island Grove as uncharted and impassable when a paved road cuts through it today. I’m nearly there. I turn off Highway Nine at a small town called Gruver and head south down a paved county road. A remnant wood island surrounding Swan

Lake appears in the distance. The road dead-ends at a T intersection and I turn right, then left again at the corner with the small Lutheran church. A few more miles through the fields and the tallest trees come into view. This is what remains of Island Grove.

By the year Allen and his men arrived in Island Grove, the Iowa tribe had left the Undine and the Sac and Fox tribes had ceded their lands to the US government. Four Dakota bands, the Mdewkanton, Wahpeton, Wahpekute, and Sisseton, now found themselves in control of a land where their enemies once lived, but the United States was pushing further toward the Missouri river with each new railroad. Within a decade of the dragoon's march, the first homesteaders arrived on the outer edges of Island Grove. Late in the summer of 1856, Thomas Mahar, John Rourke, and Patrick and Edward Conlan made land claims in Island Grove, and their families became the first people of European heritage to call the place home. Mahar built a cabin on the west side of Mud Lake, Rourke homesteaded on the shores of the other, and the Conlan's on the northern edge of the slough. I've seen a yellowed, sepia photograph of Thomas Mahar: a stout man with a huge beard dressed in a dark coat, pants, and

matching hat who stands in front of his log cabin with an expression I can't quite make out.

Mahar and his scattered neighbors were incredibly isolated on the frontier, and traveling eighty-seven miles to Fort Dodge to purchase provisions could take over a month. When Chief Ishtahaba and his band of three hundred Sisseton arrived to make their annual winter camp, they provided the homesteaders with fish and engaged with them in trade. Without the Sisseton's support, it is unlikely that Island Grove's new inhabitants would have survived their first year. The winter that followed their arrival would become one of the worst on record. Historian Paul Norman Beck wrote, "On December 1, 1856, the pleasant fall came to an abrupt end with a massive blizzard. For three days and nights, the storm raged throughout northern Iowa, dumping more than three feet of snow over the area. The storm was followed by new blizzards, one right after the other, until there were snowdrifts of twelve to twenty feet and temperatures of -37 degrees. It remained cold throughout spring, with some snow drifts remaining until July."

On March 20, 1857, a man named Morris Markham walked thirty miles across the snow-covered prairie, returning to the pioneer village at Spirit

Lake. He had gone to Island Grove to retrieve his two escaped oxen and was enroute to the Thatcher's cabin with the animals in tow. The trip took nearly the entire day, and he arrived just an hour before midnight to find the cabin ransacked and the family murdered. Markham retreated into the woods and, after a sleepless night, emerged to silence. He went from house to house, but there was no one left alive. Markham was the first witness to the aftermath of the Spirit Lake massacre: thirty-five people killed and four women taken captive by a Wahpekute band led by Chief Inkpaduta.

The members of the Wahpekute band who killed the pioneers in Spirit Lake had suffered hardships at the expense of the settlers leading up to the massacre in 1857. Years earlier, they were left out of treaty negotiations that transferred the ownership of their sacred land, the Okoboji-Spirit Lake region, to the United States government. In turn, the government parceled it out to homesteaders journeying to the places mapped by Nicollet and Potter. In the months leading up to the massacre, the harsh winter had left the Wahpekutes in need of provisions, but settlers in Spirit Lake had stripped them of their weapons, leaving them unable to hunt. These

grievances exploded into the violence that Morris Markham stumbled upon.

Markham fled to Springfield, Minnesota and military support was requested from Fort Dodge to track down Chief Inkpaduta and his band and to retrieve the captive women. Traveling north toward Okoboji-Spirit Lake in a spring snowstorm, soldiers from the Spirit Lake expedition camped in Island Grove on March 31, and John Maxwell recorded in his journal that "the Indians had kept a lookout in a big cedar tree that grew on the island in Mud Lake... they had built a platform forty feet up in the tree from which they could see twenty miles around." If Maxwell's estimation is correct, a person standing in the lookout could see nearly all the way to Spirit Lake. Did he believe those keeping watch were involved in the massacre? He doesn't say.

Although they did not participate in the violence, the Sisseton left Island Grove and stayed in the upper reaches of the Undine. And despite the goodwill the Island Grove settlers had with the Sisseton, Patrick Conlan joined Morris Markham in Company C of the Northern Border Brigade, a division of the army established to protect settlers from "the Indian threat." Company A was stationed in Estherville, Iowa, ten miles outside of

Island Grove, where they constructed Fort Defiance under the leadership of their captain William H. Ingham.

In the following years, many settlers left the prairie lakes region, but most in Island Grove remained. One devised a business, charging a nickel to guide travelers through the maze of waterways that had frustrated Allen and his men many years before. Despite efforts to map it, the land was still treacherous to those unfamiliar with its topography. So, travelers had three options: pay Mr. Berge a nickel to guide them, get stuck, or spend three days going around the grove rather than through it. Berge's business was a profitable one, and new settlers continued to arrive. In time, the Sisseton returned. Fort Defiance was abandoned before the Civil War. By 1859, the region surrounding Island Grove had attracted enough settlers to organize themselves into a county which they named Emmet after an Irish patriot. New maps reflected these changes. Potter's rudimentary sketches of Iowa Territory were replaced by drawings of the county featured in atlases as a tidy grid of homesteads.

Underneath the plat, I see peat bogs set on fire, marshes drained, trees felled, passenger pigeons piled in heaps, bison populations decimated, wheat

swaying in the wind where goldenrod once flowered. Outlines of Island Grove's lakes—now named Mud and High—appear where Potter once wrote "lakes, marshes, and low prairie" over a blank expanse. As I trace Island Grove's history forward in time I watch the lakes fluctuate with each cartographer's hand. In 1875, the name High Lake appears on the lake with the bison jump where the Rourke's settled. In 1904 the lake with the island where the Indian lookout once stood and where Thomas Mahar buried his mother, wife, and child after losing them to influenza is labeled Mud Lake, a name John Maxwell had known in 1857. These maps show me that Island Grove is not a place, but a continuum. For centuries, mapmakers have made vain attempts to preserve our world by cataloguing it in atlases. Landscapes are pinned down like insects mounted by collectors, and with each new map, a place is frozen in time. These old maps are windows to the past. Look at a map and you will see a fleeting glimpse of what we know now, or what we knew then. With time, continents drift apart; earth becomes round. Terra incognita vanishes, bit by bit.

In 1865, when the Civil War had ended and bison sightings had become

rare, an immigrant family from Norway moved to the shores of High Lake to farm. According to local history, the Pederson's were good friends with Chief Moon Eye, leader of the Sisseton, and invited him to stay in their white clapboard farmhouse on many occasions. It was 1895, at the time of year when May apples and trout lilies bloom that the Sisseton dismantled their winter camp and left permanently, forced out by the United States government. By then the woods had changed. The bison and elk had disappeared along with the much of the prairie. What remained were the names the Dakota left behind: wood islands, Spirit Lake, nesting place of the blue heron. But those were disappearing, too.

It happened first at Okamanpeedan Lake when two men laid homesteading claims on its shores. An argument broke out between them over whose name would be given to the lake, and the decision was settled by a fistfight. Mr. Tuttle won, but it was the herons who lost. Some years later, the slough in Island Grove took the name Cunningham. Then, on May 10, 1950, a local newspaper announced that, "Mud Lake in Emmet county was renamed Ingham Lake in honor of Captain William H. Ingham, pioneer, hunter, land surveyor and soldier." There is no record that

William H. Ingham ever visited the lake that came to bear his name.

In 1854, Thoreau wrote, "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." What is the depth of our nature here on this continent if the full history of a place like Mud Lake meets its end in the name of a man who never swam in its waters?

Although the newspaper did not reveal who lobbied for Mud Lake's renaming, I suspect the founders of the camp where I spent many summers had something to do with it. It seems an unlikely coincidence that Ingham Lake Bible Camp opened on the shores of Mud Lake the same year. Removed as I am from this decision, I can't help but feel implicated in it, simply because I took the name for granted for so long. I never thought to question where it came from or what it meant. The year I learned how Ingham Lake got its name, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America approved a churchwide statement called "Repudiation on the Doctrine of Discovery." Publicly, the ELCA lamented the genocide sanctioned, the violence inflicted, and—for the first time—apologized for the church's complicity and support of the Doctrine.

How could one apology ever be enough?

What would it mean to extend an apology to Mud Lake itself?

To repudiate is to say no. No, I do not want to live in a world named for those men who participated in the systematic theft and destruction of the prairie bioregion, even if they are my own ancestors. A wealthy landowner himself, my great-great-grandfather served on the board of directors of the Kossuth County bank with William H. Ingham in 1886, but I refuse to see land as a commodity the way that they did. Not here, where waters teem with myth and meaning and unite people across generations and cultures. I choose to pledge my allegiance to this land of herons, of islands, of mud. The land of spirits. The stories behind these names are the ones I want to hear, to learn, to tell and retell. I believe this land—the only place I've truly experienced the presence of God—will still enchant those who listen.

I turn the corner and breathe the earthy aroma of the lake through my open windows and feel humidity give way to a cooler breeze. The road curves into an isthmus between a small slough and High Lake and I think about Mr. Berge

guiding wagons over the same route as road it dips and rises to hug the curving shoreline where blue water gleams from behind a leafy canopy. Then it glides past a rusty swing set, a small beach, and the arboretum up the hill. Across from the neat rows of trees is a weathered wooden sign engraved with *Ingham Lake Bible Camp*. Opposite the camp is Wolden Park, named for a naturalist born to a pioneer family who once lived in Island Grove. He spent his life in the High Lake woods and and authored a complete list of their flora. Over a lifetime of tracking bird migrations and blooming times, he became one of those rare people who knew his place and those he lived among with great intimacy.

The trees open and a patchy meadow fills either side of the road where it forks and continues into a thin grey line suspended between Ingham and Cunningham Slough. A man named Bill Fisher opened a lunch counter near this fork in 1924 which served soft drinks and ice cream to visitors encouraged by the local newspaper to take a scenic drive through “one of the most beautiful spots in Iowa.” The main branch of the road stays southbound and passes the spot where a trail leads into the woods. Tucked along the shore of Cunningham Slough is a sign crafted by an Eagle

scout, bearing the name “The Magic Place.” I picture it and wonder how he chose the name. Is it possible that across generations, he too heard the whispers of water spirits heard by Joseph Nicollet? Or is that only me, wishing for it to be true?

To the west is the Emmet County Nature Center where I sat with its director and listened to his stories about the Pederson family and Chief Moon Eye. The shoreline of High Lake climbs steeply behind the building, straight up to the old bison jump, now a campground. The road continues past a few houses toward the old Pederson farm with its red barns and white farmhouse, then it slips narrowly between the shores of Cunningham Slough and High Lake. Jack Creek Cemetery perches on a hill at the base of Cunningham Slough; the field of headstones etched with old Norwegian names is the last sight before the road straightens and empties into its delta, a sea of farmland. What took dragoon soldiers three days to ford and cost pioneers a nickel per wagon has taken me less than ten minutes by car.

I park and walk to the edge of High Lake where the sun spills orange into the water as it dips out of sight. One hundred and forty years ago, a man stood where I stand now and watched “as the sun

sank low in the summer sky, its rays illuminating the shores of the lake to the east, the prairie resplendent with... purple phlox, tall orange meadow and prairie lilies, golden meadow parsnips, purple coneflowers, masses of the brilliantly orange flowers of the butterfly-weed.” He listened to the calls of the meadowlarks and the “bubbling, rapturous notes of the bobolink.” His name was Peter Wolden. Years later, his son, the naturalist Olaf Wolden, described his father’s memories and said, “There are probably those who will say; ‘All this is past. Why dwell so much on the scenes and sounds of a long since vanished past? We are living in a different age.’”

“But this is history,” Wolden replied. “And some history is still being taught.”

Both & Neither

Like I said, I'm imploding right now,
I'm bursting from the seams.
As boy as broken, as girl as ground,
like I said, I'm imploding right now.
As sweet as rain, the bitterness of clouds,
responsibility's only color t-shirt clean.
Like I said, I'm imploding right now,
I'm bursting from the seams.

How much does it cost to blend in?
Like I said, I'm imploding right now,
resisting divine intervention.
How much does it cost to blend in,
to overcompensate existence.
As girl as gotcha, as boy as wow.
How much does it cost to blend in?
Like I said, I'm imploding right now

I'm bursting from the seams.
How else should I explain?
Of pink and blue, I'm both,
I'm bursting from the seams.
I'm a violet hue, a feathered hope,
a hush of wind, a rushing wave.
I'm bursting from the seams.
I'm neither. It depends on the day.

Jaimeson Oakley

Holy War

'Thou shalt not kill' and
moral principles
taught in Sunday school
trained out of you to

be a fit soldier
able to withstand torture
all in basic training
for the United States military.

Back home now missing limbs,
brain injuries,
thoughts of suicide,
guilt, PTSD,

pain med addictions.
Good luck soldier.
God bless America.



Beatrice Greene

Choosing My Afterlife

Robert Cording

After my cardiac arrest,
the cardiologist said, *you're lucky,*
you were dead for a few minutes.

That's something, but I'm still not sure what.
Being dead was a blank,
which, lately, I've taken as an invitation
to fill in my afterlife.

In it, I ask a dodo bird for forgiveness
and watch that river of passenger pigeons
Audubon watched for days.

I relish seeing aurochs and great auks
and, oh, so many plants and tree leaves
I've seen only as fossils in museums.
And just one glance
at the Lord God Bird is paradise.

In my afterlife, I finally know
control has nothing to do with me.
And everyone's "I" is lower case,
fully human, as we never could be
when we were alive,
always shoving love out where it most belonged.

Cruelty will at last be seen for what it is—
a choice we make when no understands
who anyone else really is.

In my afterlife, all the dead in me
are waiting for my postponed arrival.
I so much want to have them
all around me—

my grandfather pouring melted lead
into sinker forms for spring fishing,
my aunt and grandmother clicking away
at one of those crochet pieces
I find in all the drawers of my parents' house,

and my parents, of course, still bickering
over the smallest things,
and keeping each other alive.

But it's my son I want most to see,
the loose-limbed casual ease
with which he once walked before his back
gave out. I'd happily be dead

to hold him. Yet, if I'm honest,
too many questions get in my way—
if my son knew me,
would that mean he still knew
the spasming pain he lived with?

Would he have a body at all
or just be one of Dante's celestial orbs
of light floating just out of reach?

The truth is, when I fill in my afterlife
with those I love, everyone is still on earth,
each small thing they did
still continuing in my mind,

in my life here where they can live
because I am lucky to be alive.

Michael Lyle

Cosmic Lesson

my aging hand
bulging veins
arthritis-altered
finger joints

grips the chubby
ergonomic pen
firmly as it once held
the narrow yellow pencil

eraser end
pointing past
my right shoulder
at angels
I never thanked

as I pushed
and pulled the lead
toward another sharpening

same small muscles
my brain and body
still control

well-used engine
firing pistons combusting
like a miniature
of stars' elegant death

white dwarf
to black dwarf
to timeless ray
in peaceful dark

The Nearness of Art

Deborah Leipziger

She made Adam
marking his shins
and cheekbones
the striations of muscles
his rib cage his hair
she sculpted him

from the mussel shells
of the Atlantic,
ebony cobalt,
she sculpted him

using only nature's gifts --
coral flowers bones
the skull of a springbok--
silver,
she sculpted him

for 15 years she sculpted
Adam, grinding shells --
each day
she became sicker
losing her hearing
memory
balance
and still she sculpted,
building Adam,
from her "memory of joy"
drilling shells laced
with lead and arsenic

poisoned
by her own hands
her own
Adam

Note: This poem is based on the Canadian sculptor,
Gillian Genser

<https://torontolife.com/life/my-beautiful-death/>

To the Woman in the Next Booth at the IV Therapy Center

Alison Jennings

If you ever felt the universe was the unfairest ever
that the skies above filled with soaking rain have opened
if you ever felt that for months you've been up against
an unbearable burden, or left stranded on a barren beach
or fired from a lousy job without getting paid
if you ever felt that your life is skittering away
as the chemo surges into a vein that has often bled
while your uterus needs more than a maxi tampon
to stanch the flow, during every session you sang
and somehow stayed buoyant, kept your spirits up
and beamed goodwill across the entire
IV therapy center, showed so much heart
because you treat this chemo like it's nothing &
all I can do is hope & pray for you that joy is coming

(nonce form based on ending words per each line in "To the Woman
Crying Uncontrollably in the Next Stall" by Kim Addonizio)

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

Jeremy Gadd

Time is a termite devouring my days,
denying me longevity and repeatedly
telling me, eventually, nothing
can save me from ceasing to be.

Time is a mirror in which I see
my wrinkles constantly reminding me
of my transitory grip on existence.

Mornings merge into afternoons,
my days are measured in coffee spoons
and summer soon turns into winter.

So, faced with anno domini,
I watch the kites wheel in the sky,
trying to imprint the image on my mind
as if storing it for recall after I die.

At the End of the Day

Mary Elizabeth Birnbaum

This laundry basket of dramatic words,
dream, angel, grief, ocean. Wear these,
in your mind's eye, and you will look so beautiful,
nobody will be able to describe you,
never mind the homeliness of your nose and chin,
you will simply inspire.

Nobody ever can describe an angel. *Messenger*,
we say, a technical term, like *mail carrier*.
An angel is somebody weary, maybe ill,
whose eyes are so full of suffering
they connect to yours with a dream like joy. But
the angel's letter, wordless.

That's god's little joke, the gift of immensity
to our tiny lives, our illusion, our costume
of *radiance*. It's late, I'm tired. No more drama,
please. I look at my bedside clock,
painted with plump naked frogs swimming
in its three-inch sky-blue pond.

Time is Catching Up

June, 2020

Tracy Lightsey

Time is catching up
after all these years.

Nowhere to go but right here.

The planets, strung like beads
from the sun, have purposely
aligned themselves against us.

They're folding time in their fist
at the end of long summer.

No surprise, we've been rushing
toward this moment for years

Progress's waterfall; wind sheer
pushing down planes...

Stand. Stand now.
Not for but right here

Fire over your head
Earth beneath your feet
The Air and Water that
flow and make up your body

Let that thin silver wire
that descends from the sun
follow the length of your breathing,
anchor you into the ground...

Let your heart's hands gradually open
as you spin; drawing the planets
into your gravity's orbit.

Hang them from the tips of your fingers.
Whisper your prayer in their ear.

Nowhere to go but right here.



Pee Wee, ink wash drawing by Eva Margueriette

A Young Artist

Eva Margueriette

The only gift is a portion of thyself. The poet brings his poem.... the painter brings her picture-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sound vibrates in my four-year-old bones. Banging on the base note keys, pretending to play the piano in the deserted hall, I don't know I'm almost deaf. No one knows yet that a fevered bout with Meningitis two years before burned out most of the nerves in my inner ears. I picture a forest fire that destroyed every tree except one. That lone tree represents my fifteen percent residual hearing in low toned frequencies.

When I was born in 1944, the world was at war. My father served as an army cook and now, he's a chef at a country club near Bisbee, Arizona, a copper-mining town on the Mexican border. My parents, baby sister, me and Mammaw, my mother's mother all sleep on cots in a storeroom off the kitchen. One night I

awaken to see my father arguing with my mother who's curled on her cot, crying. Rubbing my eyes, I turn over telling myself it's just a bad dream.

I ask her days later, "When's Daddy coming home?"

"I don't know," she says. "He went to buy a pack of cigarettes but didn't come back."

We never see him again.

I miss playing the upright piano in the sunlit social hall, but I like our little house on Douglas Road across from Evergreen Cemetery and sitting on the slanted porch drawing black-and-white spotted cows grazing by the graveyard fence, penciling in their big heads, kind eyes, and their twitching tails swatting flies. Thunder grumbles on rainy days as I sculpt cows in moist gray clay, inhaling the scent of sagebrush and after-rain.

My mother's a surgery nurse at Copper Queen Hospital in Bisbee and Mammaw takes care of us. When not cooking, gardening or chasing us with a switch, she reads her black leather Bible with gold index tabs. Next to her chair an empty coffee can serves as a spittoon when chewing snuff--she calls her *consolation*.

Parked at her knee, she teaches me to sing, *The Old Rugged Cross*, belting out, *lost sinners were slain*, vibrating the

high notes. Mammaw's face glows when singing hymns, but sometimes when she sits by the window in her lavender house dress smelling like starch and snuff with her worn Bible opened on her lap, she's weeping.

Soon after we move in, my sister and I are making mud pies in our yard when two edible airplanes fashioned from Lifesavers and Juicy Fruit gum land at our feet. An old woman in a sun bonnet peeks through our sweet peas climbing the fence. "Welcome girls. I'm your neighbor, Pee Wee!" She looks like Mammaw, but older and smaller with leathery sun-scorched skin. She and Daddy Jim, who always wears overalls, are over eighty.

My new friend and I traipse into the high desert hunting for fool's gold and *cow chips* as she calls them. We stuff the stinky lightweight discs in burlap bags and drag them home to fertilize her flowers and vegetables. Behind her house of tiny rooms, I help her feed baby goats with a baby bottle and gather warm eggs in the musty-smelling chicken coop. Kneeling amongst her healing herbs of sage and thyme, Pee Wee teaches me how to plant seeds in a row.

Once a week, she dons her flowered cotton church-dress, we pick

the biggest blossoms in her garden, and we make our way across the road to Evergreen Cemetery.

"Be careful not to walk on the graves," she says. "People are lying under the ground, and it would be disrespectful to step on them."

Laying our flowers on chosen graves, we sit side-by-side on a large tombstone in the shade of the cypress tree and Pee Wee tells me all about her family members buried there. I cannot remember the stories, her exact words, but even now I can hear her voice. I can see her moist eyes as afternoon shadows move across the old tombstones, shapeshifting across her church-dress and straight white hair, her wrinkled hands and face. I can still smell the fragrant base notes of our wilted bouquet, the sweet earthiness of cows and new graves.

That fall, I start kindergarten in the brick schoolhouse at the end of the road. My teacher, surprised I know the names of all the colors, encourages my love of finger-painting. When Daddy Jim dies, my mother takes me to see him at the Bisbee Baptist church. He's not wearing his overalls and doesn't look like himself. In Evergreen Cemetery, I hold Mammaw's hand as two men lower

Pee Wee's husband into the ground and shovel dirt on top of him.

Roaming the desert, I collect dead bugs, lay them on beds of cotton in empty jewelry boxes, bury them by the daisies and stick crosses on their graves made with twigs and twine. I'm not afraid of death. Not yet.

Months later, on a quiet night, quieter than my flawed perception of quiet, ghosts and tombstones lost in shadow behind the cemetery gate. The Milky Way glows in the indigo sky above Douglas Road. I'm reaching up trying to touch that starry band of light when an ambulance stops in front of Pee Wee's house. Red lights flashing. I don't hear sirens but in my five-year-old wisdom, I know the white monster has come to take away my friend. My first thought is to make her a gift. I run into the house, plop down on the linoleum, fold a piece of construction paper and draw a red crayon heart inside.

My impulse to give my friend a gift of my creation, a portion of myself, even at such a young age, is an artist's response to life. Like the poet bringing his poem, the gardener her flowers, the painter her picture, I rush back outside just as Pee Wee's frail body is eased into the ambulance, place my card in her hands and say goodbye.

Flashing red lights disappear. A gust of wind blows a tumbleweed across the road into the high desert behind our house where Pee Wee and I hunted for cow chips and fool's gold. It seems darker than usual on Douglas Road as if God plucked the Milky Way from the night sky.



Certainty

Edward Michael Supranowicz

I only know
What I do not know.

Do not know if love
Or faith can be defined.

Do not always know what
I have gained or lost.

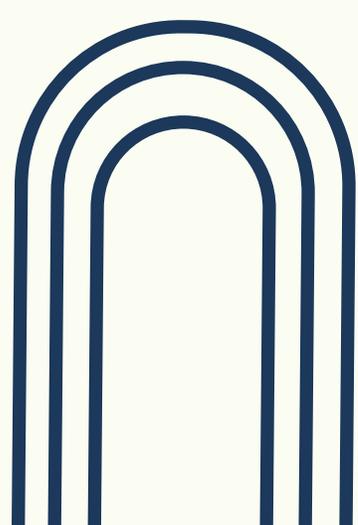
Do not know why
What is becomes what was.

I only know you
Were not here yesterday.

Only know neither
You or I might be here tomorrow.

And all I really know
Is sadness and longing.

But I know both
Should teach us to be kind.





The Final Gesture I Aspire To

Anne Yarbrough

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Like an Early Blue Abstraction*, 1976/77

At the end she could only see out of the edges of her eyes.
It is only watercolor again, only paper.

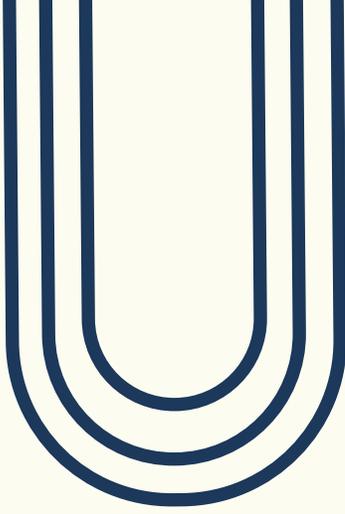
One gesture, clockwise pressure and release.
The paint as it dries as the brush lifts off the end of the curves
scatters blue flecks into emptiness.

Beneath the dark initial line blue bleeds
to its edge, clouds, unseeable.

One slow mark stops of its own accord
breathes above the water, almost touching but not
its sense at rest in its curved white space

before the lens came to rest on you
before you gave up watercolor before you became art.

And now your hand lifting again, only
paper, water, that same blue, only less --



Toward the Light

Laura Anella Johnson

Spaghetti sloshed in the colander,
the phone rang, Mom choked out
“Greatmama died this morning.”

I left my wide-eyed
children and husband at the table,
retreated to the garage, sank against
the black rubber of our minivan, prayed from
the depths of my salvation-damnation
obsession, “Oh God, let her in,”
and I heard you laugh.

Your voice an inner voice
again during my gallbladder attack.
Sliding down the bathroom wall, such pain
had to mean I’d be leaving Earth soon,
“I’m on my way, Greatmama!”
“No Baby, not tonight.”

Mom says I snore like you. It turns out
I have sleep apnea. You probably
had it too--just one of the chokeholds
that wearied your heart.
“You’re closer.”
“I know.” I strap on the mask and tube,
deep-sea dive into sleep.

My hourglass youth has morphed into
clock-shaped middle age.
My sister takes a telling photo,
“Dear God, I look like Greatmama.”
“Like Greatmama? Oh! but we *LOVED* her.”
*That’s nice. And no offense, just...no girl
wants to look like her grandmother.*
“Honey, it’s okay, you’re just getting closer.”

When I eat too much cheese and it won't
pass through my body without a fuss,
I think of how you never touched
the stuff. "See?" I hear you say,

and when I drop crumbs on my chest--
often, like you did--I hear your echo,
"I don't know why I keep feeding 'em;
God knows they don't need to grow!"

After TV evenings in the upstairs room,
I grip the rail, stiffly lumber down, and
remember your last struggle up Mom's doorsteps:
"One day, these old legs are gonna quit hurtin'...
but then I won't know it!" and you cackled.

Won't know it?

Your words troubled me. My non-response
shamed me for years.

But you talk
like one who *knows* no pain,
knows joy that eclipses fear and death,
knows the awkward granddaughter
who sat quietly while the sociable one
carried the conversation.

You must be in a good place, the way you
talk and smile. A clear place where
eternal souls laugh at unenlightened minds,
fearful sinews flexed against crossing over,
and gray-haired regrets of bodies widened out
as though bodies are who we are.

I want to laugh like that.
Perhaps in a place outside of time,
we'll laugh together at the crying woman
sunk low in a garage, fretting over
darkness and torment,
while all around us is light.

Over the Ocean

Pamela Wax

At the doorway to the hospital room,
gleaming, high above southbound traffic
on Lexington, I catch live coverage
of Mandela's release from Robben Island,
Winnie and Nelson hand-in-hand, cheered,
waving. I, chaplain on call, turn
towards the bed to celebrate history
in the making. The woman's eyes
seek mine. Her breath pads
lightly, like a cat kneading, pawing,
perspiration sprinkled salty
on her upper lip. Low in her chest,
a gurgle. I squeeze her hand,
clammy. With my other hand,
I press the button for the nurse,
grab a tissue to dab her forehead
and neck. Her wide green eyes begin
to glaze, soften. I remember she has no
family here, think of her Irish lilt. Her name,
Bonnie. I can't summon that blessing,
the one about the road rising, the wind
at your back. I sing instead. *My Bonnie
lies over the ocean... Oh, bring back
my Bonnie to me*. The TV streams
dancing in Capetown, the trilling
crowds jostling their moving car.
Two nurses fiddle with machines
and measurements, glossy white
cords governing life and death. *You look
like a deer in the headlights*, one says.
Your first? I shake my head *no*, as I remember
singing my mother across, singing
to keep terror confined, on an island at bay.



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Embracing Solitude

Gülnar Babayeva

This Is India and Good Girls Do As We Say

Sharon Jacob

The hair tie wound around my finger
Smells of stale biscuit, dried sweat,
Tears, and aged musty fibre;
And I cradle a pair of scissors, its blade
Reflecting the harsh yellow light of
The bathroom bulb above my head.

I listen; *How old is she?*
My left shoulder feels the shadow of goosebumps,
The hair standing on end, charged
With dreadful anticipation of what is to be.
She is a responsibility, with the family
Anxious to barter her to another.

*Oh, she loves to sing and write, they boast.
She has long vantablack locks, is quite fit.
is 5 feet 7 inches of beauty and grace;
You really will love her hair, you know?
She is very talented, just graduated,
and holds a day job. Good income, they say;
And she would be perfect for your family.*

But I don't want to go to another family;
I don't want to be married to another.
I want to dream, and think, and be free,
the girl in the mirror says to me.
*It is for your own good, they sweetly reply;
You're perfectly trapped; you must obey;
This is India, and good girls do as we say.*

My finger-tip pales and whitens,
As the hair tie around my pinkie tightens
Like a noose, like a chain, like a wedding ring.
And I taste perfect unfreedom like bile
Rising in my throat, my stomach turning,
the bright bulb blinding my smarting eye,
As I grip the wash basin till my knuckles turn white.

It is for your own good, my gentle girl —
Echoes the voice of the household
As they play with my hair, smiling sweetly.
The sickening smell of roses permeates the air
As suitors line up, the aunts watching
From behind undrawn curtains, whispering,
This is India, and good girls do as we say.

The girl in the mirror looks at me
Her eyes defiant, her lips determined;
And Jet-black locks fall noiselessly on the wet tiles,
As the blade glints, and does the girl's bidding,
Till I stand on a carpet like soft, thick, black grass.
And the girl in the mirror looks spent, her face glowing;
There is a cost to perfect freedom.

*But this is India, and good girls **must** do as we **say***
Angry voices shout, scalding the girl's heart;
But I unwind the hair tie around my finger,
And flush it down the toilet —
I will not be needing that anymore.
And the short-haired girl in the mirror smiles —
Shyly, but unfettered; imperfect yet free.

Marc Janssen

The Ever Changing Palette of the Sky

Everything is love
Everything-

The rounded infant surprised by her mother's face,
The alert chipmunks that skitter away from oncoming traffic,
The infinitely deep brown of the eyes of the one I love,
The perfect compass of the chinook as it travels through the mouth of the Columbia,
and the Willamette, and the Santiam, to the pebbly bottom of a discreet
unnamed creek,
The uncanny strength of ants,
The boiling eye of Jupiter before the elegant rings of Saturn,
The wavering path of the dragonfly,
The hand with its four fingers and opposable thumb each marked with its unique
swirling signature,
The cacophonous silence of the redwoods at Jedediah Smith State Park, its cathedral
half light at noon,
The fairy tale dazzles of the sun orphaned in the reflections of Bear Creek, across
the horsetail shimmers of pacific rollers with no land in sight.

It would be easy to say everything is not love.
To say the endless possibility of a child's distended belly crushes it,
Or the cancerous tumor, the savage choked, violent, debased world we sometimes
inhabit kills love as easily as thoughtlessly it kills each and every one of us.

Even in the worst of times
It speaks to us
If only in the ever changing pallet of the sky.

Infertility As

Remi Recchia

prosthetic penis
bimonthly rush of gold aggression in a vial, intramuscular
one husband, one wife
one husband who was once not a husband
one husband who, ten years ago, would not have been permitted to marry
a pointless savings account
morning prayer
forest fires drowning already-barren land
the urge to strangle a mother cat after helping to deliver her young
a flashlight out of batteries
the turtle that almost made it across Hwy-20
the lost sock behind the dryer
a leaky umbrella
a failed breathalyzer test
supplication
60-pack disinfectant wipes for a stormy, muscular thigh
the same monthly phone call back home bearing no news
no news
a canned laugh track in a live studio audience
questions
Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel
the law of the land
arriving first, sitting last
calling into a cave without the resounding echo
self-portrait
two thin lines over a flat chest
store-brand cough syrup that can't quite kick the cough
spermless body, useless as a spoutless whale

Dollhouse Boyfriend

Nina Rubinstein Alonso

Grade school boyfriend with
curly blond hair makes jokes
walks me home even plays
dollhouse a few times until
he says he can't anymore
because his dad doesn't
want him playing with girls

at least it's not about
my being Jewish but
I feel bruised by this thud
of rejection another empty
afternoon no one to play with
but boring Patty next door
we're only eight years old no clue

about who we are or might become
already have a habit of blaming myself
for whatever's gone wrong but
decades later he surprises me
with a 'friend' post via Facebook
and I'm glad to see him smiling
alive in Florida next to

what looks like grandkids
and whoever that woman may be
leaving his secrets secret
privacy untarnished no idea whether
he's still sensitive and gentle
grateful he's found a way to say hello
via electromagnetic technology invite me
to visit his computerized dollhouse.

Will Maya Win?

Samy Swayd

Some people enter our lives
through the blind spots
while others are expected to exit
with their perspectives packed
on their backs or stacked in the
circular cracks of our own
rigidly-caged characters.

Those who enter may soon exit
because we're fully-awake
to their hyperreal words and facts
but wholly-asleep to our own deep
tender-hearted spiritual selves.

We go months after months
waving
at fake-true entrances and exits
craving
a lasting moment of meaning—
stripped of strains and stains
and dipped neck-deep
in purpose and peace.

We often sit to reflect (or vent)
in a tiny corner-tent built of broken
olive branches collecting particles of dust.
We sit and unconsciously wait for the high
whistling winds to absolve
all of our inept illusions.

Then we recall Rumi who still walks
across the literate cultures of the earth
and sings in people's folded ears
a timeless priceless couplet:
"The truth is concealed
in falsehood like
the taste of butter
in buttermilk."

A Father's Son

Sandeep Kumar Mishra

The mourners were not plentiful the day of the funeral. Charvik Sharma had not been a popular man in this life, having dedicated very little time to cultivating and maintaining relationships. Sahil, his eldest, watched the people move about in respectful silence, occasionally stopping at one of his siblings or mother to offer quiet condolences while the chanters continued through their mantras. Some made their way over to him, but he had nothing to say to them in return. Everything was too fresh -- Sahil wasn't sure how he felt about his father's death yet. He hadn't even seen his father for at

least ten years before now, having gone off to live with his aunt while still a boy.

He looked over at his mother, his brother Ishaan, and his sister Shaleena. His mother looked sad at least, but Ishaan and Shaleena looked about as numb as he doubtless did. He wondered what the past ten years had been like for them. If their father had changed at all since failing Sahil.

He would never forget the first time his father struck him. It was a miserable, humid day, the air so wet that you could

almost taste it. Charvik was home, classes having been let out, and was especially short of temper.

Sahil, still a small child at the time, refused to go outside to play. "It's too hot," he remembered protesting. "I'll melt!"

His mother had gently but firmly encouraged him to go outside anyway. "You won't melt, I promise. But you really should go outside. The sun is good for you."

"I don't want to!" His little voice rose in aggravation.

"Sahil, my darling, please go outside." His mother looked around, fear coloring her face. It was the first time Sahil could recall seeing his mother afraid, though it would not be the last. Charvik appeared around the corner, his face an oncoming storm, and Sahil instinctively understood his mother's fear.

"What is the meaning of this noise?" It was less a question than a demand. Sahil ventured a reply. "I don't want to go outside."

The baleful gaze Charvik leveled at his son burned into the young boy's soul. "I heard your mother tell you to go outside. Why do you stand there mewling?"

"I--"

SLAP.

"Do as you're told! If I see you in the house again before supper you will get twice as bad!" Tears ran unchecked down Sahil's face, and he bolted through the door before his father could rebuke him for those, too. Oblivious to his surroundings he fled off into town, and did not dare return home until well after dark.

"Sahil?"

Sahil glanced over to find his sister standing beside him, her previously numb expression now one of concern.

"Yes, Shaleena?"

"I just... I wondered if you were alright. You've barely spoken a word since coming home." Home. This was not his home anymore, hadn't been his home since he had been sent away. "I'm fine. Just a little impatient to be done with this."

Shaleena nodded. "You and father never did get along."

Sahil gave her a glance. "You say that as though I am unique in that respect." She shrugged slightly. "He... tried, I think, to make some small amends. He never apologized, not in as many words, but he was... softer." She hesitated, as though weighing her words. "I think he missed you."

Sahil scoffed. "I find that unlikely."

Shaleena was quiet for a long moment after that. "Well, I missed you at least. And I'm glad you came back, even if it's just for this." She briefly touched his arm, then moved back towards their mother without further comment. He allowed his mind to wander again, passively listening to the chants and watching the dancing flames of a candle.

"I know your father was very cruel." Sahil shook his head and looked over to where his Aunt Shashi was addressing him. "Perhaps he will be kinder in his next life."

Sahil couldn't reply to that. He wasn't certain his father deserved another life.

"I am sorry you did not get to say goodbye," his aunt ventured again. She was a kind woman, almost a second mother to Sahil, but she was too forgiving. "I am not." The first words Sahil had spoken since the funeral began. "We spent all our words to each other a long time ago."

A young Sahil stood nervously in his father's cramped office. Their small house afforded little enough space for their steadily growing family, yet Charvik refused to give up this room. Sahil had no idea what it was for, he just knew that his father's claims to it meant that he

and his new brother Ishaan would be sharing a room.

"Your brother will be your responsibility," he remembered his father saying sternly, eyes intense and hard. "I expect you to take the responsibility."

Sahil didn't speak. He knew by then that discussions with his father were not truly discussions, they were just brief moments when his father bothered to remember he had a child long enough to impart specific instructions. Any words on Sahil's part would earn him a backhand, and that was if his father was in a decent mood.

"That means helping your mother feed and change him, teach him, and--"

"Keep him out of your way?"

The words were a mistake -- Sahil knew that before he said them, but sometimes he couldn't help himself. He stood defiantly as the fury entered his father's eyes. He would feel the repercussions of that remark for a long time, and remember them even longer.

Sahil wasted no time after the traditional ten day mourning period to get back to his life. The fact that he even had to take ten whole days off irritated him, and he was unreasonably short with his family because of it. He wanted to leave this

house and its memories, wanted to get back to his own wife and child and job, and wanted to burn the past away just as the body had been burned. On the tenth day his brother found him alone and sat beside him. Sahil looked over skeptically; he and his brother had never been close and disagreed often, and had hardly spoken to each other these past days.

"I assume you plan to leave with the sun," Ishaan began, not looking over.

"Before the sun, if I can manage it. I have a long ride home and the earlier I start the earlier I am back where I belong."

Ishaan shook his head. "You never cared for home."

"You make it sound like I chose to leave in the first place," Sahil countered, frowning.

"Perhaps not. But you did choose not to come back."

"Father--"

"Damn it, Sahil, this isn't about Father!" Ishaan stood suddenly with this outburst, spinning so he looked down at Sahil.

"You left more than Father behind! You left Shaleena and Mother too, or did you think being sent away to school freed you from your responsibilities as eldest?"

"I checked in when I could. Everything was under control, and Father didn't want me back besides."

Ishaan threw his arms in the air. "Typical Sahil. Always running from Father. If you only gave him the respect he deserved, perhaps--"

"You want to talk to me about respect?" Sahil was standing now. "You call abusing behaviors worthy of respect?"

"He was our father. He deserved your respect regardless." Ishaan began to head back inside, but paused in the doorway. "But I don't see you'll listen to me. You'll just run, like you always have."

By sunrise on the eleventh day he was packed and ready to go, not even staying for breakfast. He had nothing more to say to his mother or siblings, and they had lived the past ten years without him; there was no reason to stay here any longer. So he quickly and quietly slipped out of the home of his childhood to catch the first train of the day and refused to look back.

As he walked, his thoughts wandered. He looked forward to home, hoped the train was running on time, hoped his wife Viha had set aside some dinner for him, and a thousand other thoughts like these -- anything to get his mind off where he was and what had just happened and get him moving forward. He was so

focused on putting the past behind him that he didn't notice the football until it was almost too late.

With a small yelp he bobbed his head to the side, narrowly avoiding a head-on collision with the flying ball. He shook his head, startled and confused, and looked around for the ball's owner. He spotted them easily enough, a young boy -- who was smiling apologetically -- and his father -- who was laughing -- just down the road. The father jogged towards Sahil.

"My apologies," he began, still laughing a little. "My son and I like to come out for a little game before I have to go to work, and we are unaccustomed to sharing the road so early."

Sahil took a moment to gather his wits before answering. "Ah... it is alright. I was not hit, so no harm." His eyes drifted back to the boy. "You two do this... often?"

The father nodded. "Most mornings. I work long hours, so I cherish the moments I can. Surely you can understand this?"

Sahil looked back at the father. Such genuine happiness, speaking about his son, was something Sahil did not understand at all.

"Sahil, why does father never come out to play with us?"

Sahil didn't turn to look at his little sister. Shaleena was barely five, but already she was noticing that their house was not like the houses of some of her friends. Her father was practically a stranger to her, only seen at meals and on holidays. No great loss there, Sahil thought with no small measure of distaste.

"Because he is too busy," Ishaan said when it was obvious that Sahil had nothing to say.

"Busy with what?"

Ishaan paused. "Work, I guess."

Shaleena clearly didn't understand, but filed the information away nonetheless and pressed on to her next question.

"And why is he so sad?"

This got Sahil to speak. "You think he's sad?" Shaleena nodded and Sahil scoffed. "Why do you think this?"

"Because he never smiles. Sad people don't smile."

It made sense, in a little kid logic sort of way, but Sahil had trouble picturing his father's constantly dour expression as anything but angry.

"He isn't sad," Sahil said finally, frowning at the football by his feet. "I don't know what he is, but he isn't sad."



This confused the little girl more but Sahil chose that moment to kick the ball and she took off after it, screaming with joy. Ishaan looked at Sahil and frowned. "Don't speak of our father like that."

Sahil rolled his eyes and watched Shaleena run. "Why not? It isn't like he's around to hear us, and even if he was he never listens to anything we say."

"But--"

"I don't want to hear it, Ishaan. Come on, let's catch up to Shaleena."

Given the early hour the train station was thankfully quiet, and Sahil managed to purchase his ticket and board with minimal wait. He also had his choice of seats for the long ride ahead of him. Settling his luggage above him, he sat heavily and sighed, thankful to be on the way home at last. The rest of his day promised to be an easy one, as it was nothing more tedious than waiting until he reached his stop that evening, then getting a cab to take him home. Comforted by these thoughts, he drifted into a light nap as the train began to move.

When he stirred a few hours later, he noticed the car was significantly more crowded than it had been, with nearly

all the seats outside of the one directly beside him taken. He also noticed a lone man who, noticing that Sahil was awake, headed his way.

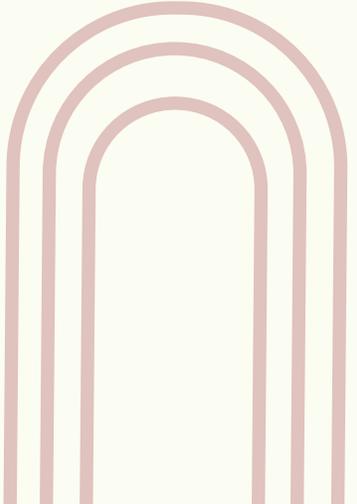
"A thousand apologies, sir, but is that seat taken?" He indicated the seat beside Sahil. "No. Please, sit." The man nodded his thanks and situated his own luggage, pulling out a well worn book before stashing the bags, and settled into the seat. Sahil's eyes were instantly drawn to the cover.

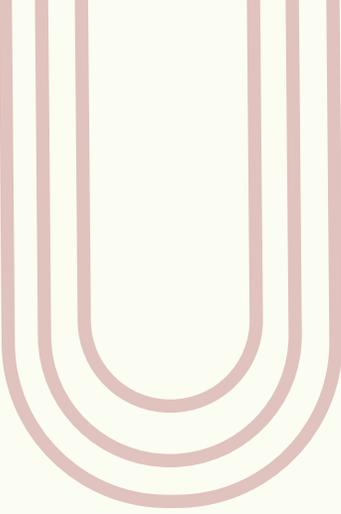
The man noticed Sahil's attention and held the book up for better inspection. "I take it you are familiar with "Songs of Kabir"?"

Sahil startled at the man's question as though shocked. "Oh, ah, not as such. Or rather I have not taken the time to read that particular collection myself. Someone... I knew, they did. Spoke of it very highly."

The man nodded understandingly and began flipping through the pages. "It is a good book. If you have any love of poetry, I highly recommend it."

"I... shall keep that in mind."





“Are you a student of poetry?”

“I teach a high school literature class and occasionally write my own pieces. Nothing worth

publishing, but....”

The man nodded. “It’s nice to put thought to paper?”

“Exactly. And poetry has always been special to my family.”

“What are you reading?”

Sahil looked up from his own perch across the room from the conversation, watching where Shaleena had approached their father’s armchair and interrupted his reading with her question. He instinctively tensed, waiting for the cold dismissal or fiery rage at being disturbed; the first would cause Shaleena to run away hurt and Sahil to follow so he could calm her down, and the second would be directed at Sahil for not keeping her distracted in the first place. Either way it was about to become Sahil’s problem.

Yet Charvik did neither. Instead, he looked up slowly and studied his daughter for a moment, as though trying to remember who she was and how he should react. Then he closed -- actually closed -- his book in order to show her the cover.

“This is a book of poems. Can you read the title?”

Shaleena squinted at the letters. “Songs of Kabir?” She spoke slowly, careful to get every word correct. Sahil couldn’t help but be a little impressed. He hadn’t realized her reading skills had progressed so far.

Charvik smiled at her, and Sahil frowned in confusion. “That’s right,” their father said, sounding pleased. “Would you like to read some poems with me?”

Sahil looked back down to his own book, but he couldn’t focus on the words anymore. That was the kindest he’d ever seen his father behave towards anyone outside of their mother. He watched and listened as Charvik read to Shaleena, poem after poem after poem. He didn’t seem to grow tired, or annoyed, but rather he seemed almost... happy.

“Are any of these by you, dad?”

Charvik paused at that question. “No. I have written poems, but I have not been so blessed as to have them published.”

“Maybe someday?”

“Yes,” he said, a wistful look in his eyes.

“Maybe someday.”

Hailing a taxi to take him from the train station to his home didn’t take long, thankfully. It was already much later than Sahil had hoped to arrive home, as a scheduling mixup with a different



train had caused a delay of nearly two hours, and he was now more anxious than ever for the comfort of his wife and bed. As he was driven across the city, the driver made occasional attempts at small talk, most of which Sahil answered with polite but short replies, doing his best to avoid a protracted conversation. One comment, however, caused him to pay attention.

“Are you excited for the start of Onam tomorrow?”

Sahil blinked. “That’s tomorrow?”

The driver nodded. “I love Onam, personally. Well, specifically the Onasadya Feast, but the entire festival is fun.” Sahil glanced at the driver’s bulky figure and guessed that the man did not save feasting for the festival alone. “Do you participate?”

“Hurry, Sahil! Father wants us to be among the first visitors to the temple!”

Sahil groaned, stretched, and tried to rub the sleep from his eyes. “The... temple?”

“Yes, the temple!” Shaleena was entirely too excited and loud for this early hour.

“It’s the first day of Onam!”

Sahil shook himself more fully away and swung his legs over the side of his bed.

Onam... he smiled a little as Shaleena scampered off, her mission accomplished. Father was always

in high spirits during religious festivals and holy days, his usual dour expression lightened and stormy mood calmed. He might even be persuaded to give his children treats, so long as all the proper observances are met. “It is a holy day first and a festival second,” he would solemnly intone. “Be respectful of that.”

And they were. They were quiet and respectful, said the correct chants to the best of their abilities, and answered every question Charvik had for them about the origin of Onam. Then, finally, the religious observances were finished and it was time to decorate.

Their house was never so clean as it was during Onam. Everything practically sparkled with the effort put into cleaning. And between Shaleena and Charvik it was harder to find a house more thoroughly decorated, either. A veritable hillside’s worth of flowers were braided together and hung on every door frame and window. Sahil looked at the flowers and frowned. What was it about flowers and a stupid festival that suddenly made his father so cheerful? Why couldn’t he always be like this?

He wanted to tear all the flowers down.

Sahil slipped quietly into his home, unsure if his wife was still awake and knowing their infant son was not. He paused just inside, seeing the flower decorations all prepared for Onam. A frown tugged briefly at his lips, but he shook it away; the holiday had never done him any harm. Setting his luggage down in the entryway and taking off his shoes to make as little noise as possible, he made a quick walk of the house.

Everything was spotless. His wife had done an excellent job keeping up with the cleaning, even with the added responsibility of their newborn. He smiled slightly as he paused by the dining room table, laying a hand on their son's highchair. She is a good woman. I hope I am a good husband to her. He wondered briefly if his father ever had the same concern.

He moved into his office and saw everything was just as he had left it. It was, by agreement, the only room she didn't routinely clean, as Sahil had his own method to the seeming madness. He knew where everything was and that was the important part. He looked over his papers, his bookshelf, the grading pens and the half-finished poems, and he frowned. It looked remarkably like how

he remembered his father's office being laid out. How had he never noticed that before? "Am I becoming my father...?" The question was asked quietly, barely even whispered, as though Sahil was afraid of the answer. In a way he was; were not all men their fathers' sons? What hope did he have to build a better life for himself when he mirrored his father in even this tiny detail? In what other ways had he shaped himself after a man he... he what?

He missed. Here, in the darkness and the silence, he could admit it. He missed his father. Or, perhaps put better, he missed the idea of his father. He missed the connection he saw so often, even just coming home from the funeral. Someone he could talk to, someone he could play ball with, someone who led by example and listened to the worries of his children. Charvik had never been any of those things for Sahil, but he'd seen glimpses of that man in the way Shaleena interacted with him, and wondered if he had changed at all after Sahil had left. If he really had missed his son as much as his son now missed him, as Shaleena had suggested.

"It's too late for regrets," Sahil told his ghosts, trying to push them away. "He's

dead. Whatever that may mean for him, it means to me that he is beyond reach.” Forgiveness and healing were beyond Sahil’s reach; there was no saving Charvik’s memory or salvaging the relationship. The abuse, the neglect, and the fear were all Sahil had to remember his father by, were Charvik’s only legacy to his son. But Sahil was more than his father’s legacy, more than the abuse and neglect and regret. He would prove that, to himself and to his family.

Sahil left his office and its ghosts and headed up the stairs. He paused midway up to look at the pictures hanging from the wall -- him and his wife on vacation, on their wedding day, on the day they brought their son home for the first time. They were happy in those pictures. Sahil knew true joy in every moment captured and it showed. He thought back to pictures of his father; Charvik had rarely smiled in person and never for the camera. Even in the oldest photos he looked serious and stoic, never expressing joy in his life. “I am not you,” he whispered, wondering if Charvik’s spirit could hear him from wherever it had gone. “I will not be you.”

He finished climbing the stairs, bypassing his own bedroom to check on

his son. The child was sleeping soundly, completely oblivious to the presence of his father, and Sahil smiled down at the small bundle. Resting a hand on the side of the crib and nearly crying for reasons he couldn’t explain, he made his son a promise. “I’ll do better. I swear, I will do better.”

The floor creaked softly, and Sahil looked over his shoulder to see his wife, wrapped in her dressing robe, squinting sleepily at him. “Sahil?” Her voice was barely audible, and he quietly crept over to her after a final look at his son. “I didn’t hear you come in.” She squinted at him again, then reached out and touched his face, concern taking over her expression. “You’re crying! What’s wrong?”

Sahil cupped her hand and smiled. “Nothing. Come, let us go back to bed. I am ready for today to end and tomorrow to begin.”

Maija Haavisto

Loving-Kindness Prayer

after Buddhist mettā phrases

may you feel happiness
like a crackling campfire
cradling marshmallows
in its embrace

may you feel happiness
knowing you are enough

may you feel happiness
when your heart bursts open
revealing it was always full

may you feel safe
in the house you built of
pinewood and gratitude

may you feel safe
falling apart and
coming together again

may you feel safe
breathing in crisp winter air
breathing out warmth
and there's nothing else
nothing at all

may you feel love tenderly
like a wounded, wild animal

may you feel love
that recognizes the importance
of boundaries yet its vastness
knows no boundaries

may you feel love
that's pure and replenishing
like a spring creek

may all troubled beings
find comfort and strength
in each other
in love that's inseparable



One Love

Virg



Archangels of Childhood

Dimitry Blizniuk

Freshly painted with watercolors, with colorful rags,
my daughter, her hair wet,
smells of fragrant soap after the shower.
She smells of peanut butter, of archangels of childhood.
She's in loose pajamas with repeating pictures of a hedgehog and a pony.
It's such a pleasure to inhale the smell from her little head,
like a genie from an amphora,
to drink her voice, sweet dew from caps of acorns.
Yes, the hungry hogs of the past will gobble all us up,
but never mind, just wake up from your centuries-long sleep,
just rub your nose against her neck.
Here she laughs, like a bird sitting on wires.
I throw her up, and she turns and bends in the air –
a parachute when it opens rebels against the gravity, against the time.
All of us rebel, trying to push ourselves against emptiness,
embracing the moments of happiness, prosperity, disappointment,
as if hugging a kitten,
but the girl in the falling slantwise plane of years
will outlive both the kitten and me,
will dissolve in her own watercolor kingdom,
which is above my head like some sort of a sky.
And I am all down: I am a forest, a cliff that supports her,
a rock she props herself on,
but moves it easily again and again as if it were a chess knight –
and then, all of a sudden,
stillness.

(translated by Sergey Gerasimov from Russian)

I Hear

You

Andrew Rice

Celebrate that high maintenance client you didn't ditch and
the humble repair gesture you made
toward your spouse

Celebrate the way your dog loves to
sleep at your feet and
your ego's uncanny way of teaching you
about sacred fragility
and who you really are

below the stormy white caps of performance
Celebrate moonlit walks to nowhere
and the unexpected encounters that you are
willing to fall into

Celebrate how you can bow to mystery
for being mysterious
and reliably ungraspable

Celebrate the way singing an old hymn
from a complicated religion can still
bring a tear to your eye,
and remind you of holding your grandmother's hand.

Celebrate your effort to like yourself,
better, more, and with
the same forgiveness you effortlessly spill
out from your heart for
your very own defeated child

Celebrate letting go of yesterday
and the hidden joy
that will astonish you
as you meander your road
freely
ungracefully
authentically

Another

And let's have another coffee.
Let's have another piece of pie.
And when we're done won't nobody
notice (like you and I) the sky

black between the stars or the way
the snowflakes sink into our world
and then sway, fallen specks arrayed
on city sidewalks, which unfurl

ahead of us like memories
we already see (you and I).
So let's have a cup of coffee.
Let's order up a piece of pie.



Kevin Griffin

Camping in the Redwoods

Joanne Durham

The air's so full
nothing is excluded.
I inhale
my son's smile, my husband's
arm silent around my shoulder.
I want to store their gestures
like a squirrel's nuts for winter,
to save the swirling path of sunlight
that loosens shadows
from the trees.

Via Negativa: New Moon

Laura Reece Hogan

Why do I want the moon, which belongs
to you? Why do I drive against the foothills
like a maniac to moon hunt, when it's gone
missing? I don't understand
what's happening to my physics. I might
need to live in a tent for a month, away
from streetlights and other blazes. I
might need a blade, need to cut
my hair and nails to slimmest crescents
and solve for white-pleated wings of moth,
sprung whole from phases, just to die
for light. You've packed up the not-
moon tonight, a hanging
promise: your light will come.
Go barefoot in the drought-powdered dirt.
Press hard against the hull
of cocoon. The strongest sit in the dust,
unknowing. The strongest
linger in the bind, wait
for faintest sliver,
emerge.

Susan Evans

Heart of wood

I know you are tired, but come,
this is the way --
through the shadows --
To the heart of the wood.
Will you come?

I know you are tired,
And the night presses on --
but seek the lost and secret path.
Will you come?

I know you are weary,
but this is the way --
past the thorns that catch your sleeve.
Only look at the midnight sky,
cradling the white shard of moon.
It lumines your steps.
Will you come?

And though you are tired but
in the blackness
find your hope.
Let your light ignite the lantern,
Let it vanquish the dark;
It will last to daybreak,
but do not tarry.

Come, though you are weary.
Remain on the path.
Hear the wind whisper the way.
Remember only a purity
like cut steel,
Drawn out of the depths
of your heart,
moves you forward.

So, will you come?
though you are tired?
Can you conquer the forest?
Become the lantern?
Use the sword of revelation
it cuts wide,
and penetrates the long and bitter night.
It will guide you safely home.

Moon Shadows

Ron Welburn

Is it our faces absorbed into shadow
that give countenance to the moon?
Songs have never said this is so,
nor informed recitations or ceremonies.

We can only see this stepping
from dream to the charcoal edge of morning,
contemplating the grandmother
scooping the broth of night with the horns.

The face in daylight lives in sun shadow,
present indefinite tense of utterances
unlikely to cohere with the clouds' flecked
streaks or scallop mantles.

Each flower on the hillside is child
to the moon, an elder relation to memory,
faces absorbed in the shadows of smiles
of women inverting the flashing stars.

The shadow
with the grandmother is
the dwelling place, protector of forms
and shapes, the eyes and mouths
at the circle of consciousness
like a feline ruminating a doorway.

What goes around here, hand-held,
goose-winged, looking from the sky world
into the afterglow of the gibbous moon?
Where do the faces go absorbed past recognition
into the living realm of parallel gesture
where they move about and speak
according to desires or the murmurs of prey,
owl faces far off in the trees
calling their visions, repeating names?

A woman asleep on her side
half sees the full moon and
splits this knowledge
to absorb that other side.

From their path the ones leaving
can see other sides of the face,
are absorbed sometimes penetrating sleep
or send home envoys never confronted
by the sleeper to cajole and accompany and
to disrupt the agendas of continuities
fragmenting in front of the collected faces
dancing around the moon's other shadows.

It is the clearing within the trees, isn't it,
that is like the face of the moon?
That is like the eyes in the dream
one sees and cannot recognize,
the deliberate cycles of facial influence
bordered by cedar, by white willow and fir,
the rabbit-pocked snowface surrounding the home
and the hawk sentinels in hermeneutic pose?

All shadows are miasmatic in grandmother's light
scooping the broth, are drinking it
from the horns, our faces familiar to the liquid.

Isn't it in the dreaming of shadows
making the faces, the absorbent countenance
realizing the obtuse flowers of song,
what the grandmother feeds us
to strengthen our singing,
our faces to the singing of her songs?

Evening Prayer

Julie Paschold

End of day
Sun is closing her eye
in a palette of corals and golds
soft turquoises and light pinks
Time then
to sit on the patio's picnic table
the one my father built
oh so many years ago
before I was born
now painted a steel blue grey
and drink one last cup of coffee
pensive
not restless
going over the day
the good parts
the things I'm grateful for
the glitch to let go of
the goal for tomorrow
watching colors fade
and the moon awake
with her stars that have been here

oh so many years since
before I was born
appreciating our fleeting impermanence
and the earth's resilience
in this colorful world so vast
it continuously amazes me
on this day now ending
I am humbled to have the experience of it
The picnic table now a shadow underneath me
and coffee cup now empty,
the moon guides me inside
to find sleep,
hoping for another day

Flor y Canto

Joseph Murray

*Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin (1474-1548), seer
and first indigenous saint from the Americas,
is said to have been granted an apparition
of the Virgin on Hill of Tepeyac*

“Truth? What is that?” Jesus never answers Pilate’s question, which has challenged philosophers since the age of Socrates. In what seems like the dawning of a post-truth era finding an answer has become a fixation of mine. Since beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then truth should be in the mind of the speaker, or so the argument goes. Indeed the *cognoscenti politici* have trumpeted a clever, supporting syllogism:

Truth is what one hopes it is and indeed expects it to be; which of course is what it ought to be; which morphs into what it might be; then surely must be; in fact probably is; and therefore, as we used to append to our math solutions, QED, truth is what one says it is and becomes even truer with repetition.

In search of answers I headed to the library, where I spent hours in the philosophy section. I knocked on Plato’s metaphorical door but he was out to lunch. Aristotle and his offspring, Aquinas, tried to help but they sent me in circles. Ah, the moderns, Kant and Hegel, to the rescue. Hardly; they left me still drowning. Enter Jürgen Habermas, one of postmodernity’s poster children. I ploughed along his consensus theory of truth, only to discover at row’s end that it had been debunked . . . by the author himself.

Enough philosophizing and thankfully it was closing time. Mind overstuffed, I descended the library steps, collapsing into the slotted park bench nearby. Half dozing, I found myself in the ageless Náhuatl world of Juan Diego. He seemed to know about my quest, because this charge came to me: “Go out into your garden before dawn. Listen and observe. In your garden the heart of truth will be revealed.” I headed home through the mist of this mysterious message.

Next day, minutes before sunup, I was in among the flowers, the oleander shrub, the vines, and the lone desert willow, ears and eyes as open as I could seem to make them.

At break of dawn my ears found the birdsong: larks and wrens, thrushes and thrashers. Was I hearing them for the first time? Their singing was beyond enchanting. “We have no desire,” I almost heard them crow, “to be sopranos at the Met. Our song is what it is, what it is meant to be, and need be nothing else.”

As the sun crept over the Organ Mountains, I turned to my morning glories climbing their overflowing trellis. They began to yawn, then slowly to smile. “We have no interest,” they seemed to whisper, “in becoming rose or hibiscus, brilliant though these be. We are who we are, and we rejoice in the beauty that is our morning-gloryness.”

Over morning coffee and throughout the day I kept ruminating over flower and birdsong and their connection with truth. That night, as sleep began to creep, I again heard from Hill of Tepeyac that voice across time, sharing with me a vision so alien to philosophy’s world. The language was at once simple and mystical, “truth is beauty and beauty is truth, dim but true reflection of ultimate Truth.”

Juan Diego’s insight was transfigured by his descendants into a mantra that has resonated down through the centuries—

Flor y canto.



Hitching a Ride

Serge Lecomte





Isn't It Wonderful

Zach Beach

This is the Earth.
Sip slowly.
Breathe deeply.
Walk mindfully.

Taste what you're eating.
Feel the hand in yours,
the rough edges we carry.
This is the Earth.

The leaves turn light into
sweetness, mountains
give veins, oxygen reminds
us, this is the earth.

Some are dying;
some are orgasming.
Some children are learning violin;
others are digging in landfills

for a shred of food or copper.
Drop to your knees.
Touch your cracked head to the sweet grass.
This is the Earth.



Snowy Owl

Joanne Clarkson

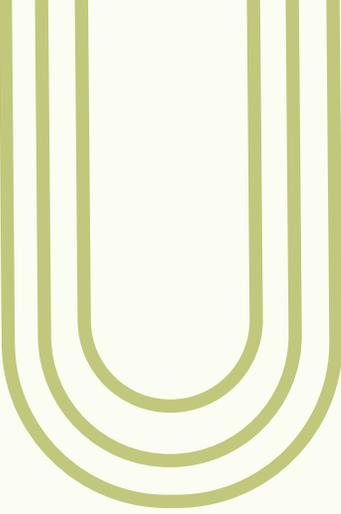
I had no time to go out
into the forest, to hike ranges
of Old Growth. I had no days left
to pursue the rumor of a rare
raptor predicted to visit
our wildlands for hours
or a weekend. I turned off

the highway by the college
onto the Delphi road
where my next patient waited,
her patient husband counted hours,
when I saw amid a stand
of dark evergreen, the utterly white
form. It didn't seem to be among

branches; it seemed superimposed.
Traffic flowing around me,
I drove on with only a glance,
yet the impression was vivid. Even
at eighty feet, maybe more,
I could determine the infinite eyes,
the arctic barbs of feathers.

I could feel in my own chest,
the labor of a long journey
and the winds yet to come. For months
when I turned onto the Delphi,
I glanced into that stand of Douglas fir.
But the owl returned
only in the startle of a dream,

so white the darkness around it
was endless. So still it became
a tatter in the veil. Ominous
but comforting. Even midweek during
ordinary duty - driving, bandaging,
soothing - the northland of a night
bird did not abandon me.



Motet

Richard Hoffman

The days yield, each to the next.
No one is finally victorious.
Life is language lived and loved.
Kindness is our need and duty.

In English the name of God
is twenty six letters long.
Life is language lived and loved.
Kindness is our need and duty.

No one is finally victorious.
The days yield, each to the next.
Life is language lived and loved.
Kindness is our need and duty.

Frankensteina

Tom Donlon

She's on the deck pouring potting soil into containers. Without her careful, persistent replenishing of plants each spring, our yard would lack its beauty. She's made it for fourteen years since the breast cancer.

She has Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) in her swollen right hand. She'll possibly overdo it and need to sleep for a couple of days. The cancer meds have taken their toll: hair and bone loss, sleep disorder, anxiety.

She's had meniscus surgery and has plans for another operation for shoulder joint pain. She adjusts her temporary front tooth. We have six children. How could we have made it without her?

She calls herself Frankensteina and notes the new body parts: cadaver bones, screws and plates from spinal surgery; a bilateral silicone implant from breast surgery, and hearing aids.

She's had cataract surgery on both eyes and is hobbling on painful knee joints across the deck tending to her tulips, daffodils and irises. She pulls the hose behind her and sprays life on the plants and all of us.

Saving Ourselves

Sarah Snyder

My heart is holding the letters
in the landscape of terrace and balcony.
I am tired of being trapped again under water
in a universe of slow motion. How fast
does a world spin? And what falls from above
besides leaves and the diary of sky?
Do you remember when love became a beast
with venom, when it raged like wildfire unfenced?
A god descended to unseed every spiral of a sunflower,
sealed the world until it was sunless.
Years of this. Then next to the weeds
a cocoon, enough to start the fragile body
again, to weave a tapestry from dead
trees and shells, to open the dictionary
of images stored behind eyelids.
We can never stop loving
a world that rescues us again and again—
those pinpricks of light we connect
and name ourselves.

Nunc Dimittis

Cristina Legarda

Do not feel loved because the sunset moves you, or stars appear to sparkle for your sake; nature's glory would be glorious in your absence. The ocean's vast expanse is not for you, nor the mountains' grandeur, lakes, and balsam pines. Their dignity is theirs without your naming –warbler's cry and wind's caress, nebulae and swathes of lavender purpling fields, desert canyons' fossil bones and lizard paths, the reddish rock with rippling pink. But neither claim the harshness of the world to be some persecution from a source unseen; shifting plates and lava flows, tidal waves, typhoons, and heavy snows, are not for you. Believe instead your glory matters too; your holiness, beloved, is that you be.

Contributor Bios

Amie Adams (she/her) is a creative writer whose essays have been published in *Midwest Review*, *Relief*, and *Pilgrimage*, and *Cagibi* among others. She grew up on the shore of an Iowa lake and is now a walking tributary of the South Skunk River. Connect with her at amieadams.space.

Nina Rubinstein Alonso's work has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The New Yorker*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, etc. Her book *This Body* was published by David Godine Press, her chapbook *Riot Wake* is upcoming from Cervena Barva Press, and a story collection and a novel are in the works.

From an early age **Luke Maguire Armstrong** fell in love with words and his writing and unique perspective on life seasons from a life lived around the world. He is an award winning author of seven books, and bases his life and travels from a Mayan village life where he works to enable the holistic education of 80 impoverished children through The Integral Heart Family education center. He lives on Lake Atitlan at the artist/writer retreat center/community he founded, Karuna Atitlan. Sometimes his joy is the cause of his smile, other times his smile causes his joy. IG@LukeSpartacus
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Bandcamp: Alekosh Atitlan

Gülnar Babayeva is a figurative sculptor & designer based in New York State's Hudson Valley. She moved from Baku, Azerbaijan in 2010 to study art & design thanks to the generosity of a local American family. Babayeva, a multidisciplinary creator at Caspian Müse, has been sculpting since 2012. She began focusing on her sculptor identity during the pandemic, which led to Babayeva's debut solo exhibition of sculpture at the Arts Society of Kingston, NY in June 2021. Her art has been shown in group and juried exhibitions locally, and virtually since she embarked on artistic path. Babayeva's sculptures have been acquired for private collections.
gulnarbabayeva.com | @caspianmuse on Instagram

Zach Beach, MA is an internationally renowned yoga teacher, best-selling author, poet, love coach, founder of The Heart Center love school, and host of *The Learn to Love Podcast*. Learn more at www.zachbeach.com.

Wayne-Daniel Berard, PhD, is an educator, poet, writer, shaman, and sage. He publishes broadly in poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. His latest published full-length works are in poetry, *Art of Enlightenment*, with Kelsay Books, in mystery fiction, *Noa(h) and the Bark*, and in short fiction *The Lives and Spiritual Time of C.I. Abramovich*, and a novella, *Fall of the Medes*, all with Alien Buddha Press. He is the co-founding editor of *Soul-Lit*, an online journal of spiritual poetry (www.soul-lit.com). Wayne-Daniel lives in Mansfield, MA with his wife, The Lovely Christine.

Mary Elizabeth Birnbaum was born, raised, and educated in New York City. She has studied poetry at the Joiner Institute in UMass, Boston. Mary's translation of the Haitian poet Felix Morisseau-Leroy has been published in *The Massachusetts Review*, the anthology *Into English* (Graywolf Press), and in *And There Will Be Singing*, An Anthology of International Writing by *The Massachusetts Review*, 2019 as well. Her work is forthcoming or has recently appeared in *Lake Effect*, *J-Journal*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Soundings East*, *Barrow Street*, and *Ligeia*.

Dmitry Blizniuk is an author from Ukraine. His most recent poems have appeared in *Poet Lore*, *The Pinch*, *Press53*, *Salamander*, *Grub Street*, *The Nassau Review*, *Havik*, *Naugatuck River*, and many others. A Pushcart Prize nominee, he is also the author of *The Red Forest* (Fowlpox Press, 2018). He lives in Kharkov, Ukraine. Member of PEN America. Poets & Writers Directory [link here](#).

Vian Borchert is a noted artist. V. Borchert has exhibited in many group and solo exhibitions internationally. Vian is a "Notable Alumni" from the Corcoran George Washington University, Washington, DC. Vian considers her expressionistic art as visual poems. Vian Borchert's art has been on exhibit in prestigious places such as the United Nations General Assembly's Public Lobby Gallery, NYC. Vian's art is in private collections and embassies. Borchert exhibits in major world cities like NYC,

LA, London. V. Borchert's art has been featured in publications such as *The Flux Review*, *SHOUTOUT LA*, *The Washington Post* and others. Borchert is an educator teaching fine art classes in the DC area. See more at: www.vianborchert.com.

Jack Bordnick is an Industrial Design graduate of Pratt Institute in New York. He has been a design director for numerous company, corporate and government projects. They included a children's museum, for the city of New York, involved in the marketing and design. Also, for IBM, The J.C. Penney Company, and many numerous other institutions. They included both the design, fabrication and the installation of these numerous projects. Come and enjoy their stories.

Yuan Changming hails with Allen Yuan from poetrypacific.blogspot.ca. Credits include eleven Pushcart nominations besides appearances in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17) & BestNewPoemsOnline, among nearly 1900 others. Recently, Yuan published his eleventh chapbook *Limerence*, and served on the jury for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards (poetry category).

Patricia Clark is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *Self-Portrait with a Million Dollars* (2021, Terrapin Books). New work is out (or forthcoming) in *Plume*, *Westchester Review*, *I-70 Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Paterson Literary Review* and others. She recently retired from thirty years teaching creative writing, English, and writing at Grand Valley State University in Michigan.

Joanne M. Clarkson's fifth poetry collection, *The Fates* won Bright Hill Press annual contest and was published in 2017. Her poems have appeared in such journals as *Western Humanities Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry Northwest* and *Alaska Quarterly Review*. She received an Artist Trust Grant to complete her manuscript and an NEH grant to teach poetry in rural libraries. Clarkson has Masters' Degrees in English and Library Science, has taught and worked as a professional librarian. After caring for her mother through a long illness, she re-careered as a Registered Nurse specializing in Home Health and Hospice Care. See more at www.JoanneClarkson.com.

Robert Cording's new book of poems, *In the Unwalled City* (Slant, 2022) is due in 2022. It will be his tenth book of poems. New work is out or forthcoming in *The Common*, *Southern Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Georgia Review*, *Agni*, and *The Hudson Review*. A poem of his appeared in the first issue of *Pensive*. He taught for 38 years at Holy Cross College.

Pamela Cranston is the author of three books: *The Madonna Murders* (2003), *Coming To Treeline: Adirondack Poems* (2005) and *Searching for Nova Albion* (2019.) Her poem "My Grandfather's Typewriter" won fifth place in the 2020 Writer's Digest Poetry Contest. Her poem "The House of Metaphor" won honorable mention for the Poetry Society of Virginia 2021 Edgar Allan Poe Memorial Prize. Pamela is a retired Episcopal priest living in Oakland, California.

Ivan de Monbrison is a poet and artist living in Paris born in 1969 and affected by various types of mental disorders. He has published some poems in the past.

Julie A. Dickson writes of nature, mystery, animals, teen issues and current events. Her poetry appears in many journals, including *Sledgehammer*, *Misfit*, *Open Word* and *Ekphrastic Review*; her full length works on Amazon. Dickson holds a BPS in Gerontology and collects stories from elders, is a Pushcart nominee and is active in the New Hampshire poetry community.

Tom Donlon lives with his wife and children in Shenandoah Junction, WV. He earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the American University in 1984. He was awarded a chapbook, *Peregrine*, in 2016 from a book contest sponsored by the Franciscan University in Steubenville, OH. Poems have appeared in many journals, newspapers, and anthologies. Recognition has included Pushcart Prize nominations and a fellowship from the WV Commission on the Arts.

Joanne Durham lives on the North Carolina coast, with the ocean as her backyard. Her poetry book, *To Drink from a Wider Bowl* (Evening Street Press, 2022), won the 2021 Sinclair Poetry Prize, and her chapbook, *On Shifting Shoals*, will be published

by Kelsay Books. Her poems appear in *Poetry East*, *Third Wednesday*, *Calyx*, *Amethyst Review*, *Gyroscope*, and many other journals. Visit her online at <https://www.joannedurham.com/>.

Nadine Ellsworth-Moran is a full-time minister living in Georgia. She is fascinated by the stories unfolding all around her and seeks to bring everyone into conversation around a common table. Her essays and poems have appeared in *Interpretation*, *The Presbyterian Outlook*, *Emrys*, *Structo*, *Kakalak*, and *Saint Katherine Review*, among others.

Susan H. Evans writes and teaches English at a community college in eastern Tennessee. She is published in *The Mockingowl Roost*, *Metapsychosis Journal of Consciousness, Literature and Art*, *Daily Inspired Life Magazine*, and *The Rising Phoenix Review*.

Jeremy Gadd has contributed over 300 poems to literary magazines and periodicals in Australia, the USA, England, Scotland, Wales, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Malaya, Sweden and India. He holds MA with Honors and PhD degrees from the University of New England and lives and writes in an old Federation era house overlooking Botany Bay, the birthplace of modern Australia. Further information can be found at: <https://jeremygaddpoet.com>.

Robbie Gamble's poems have appeared in the *Atlanta Review*, *Pacifica Literary Review*, *Whale Road Review*, and *Rust + Moth*. He was the winner of the 2017 Carve Poetry prize. He worked for many years as a nurse practitioner caring for homeless people, and now divides his time between Boston and Vermont.

Sergey Gerasimov is a Ukraine-based poet and writer. The largest book publishing companies in Russia, such as *AST*, *Eksmo*, and others have published his books. Among other things, he has studied psychology. He is the author of several academic articles on cognitive activity. His stories and poems written in English have appeared in *Adbusters*, *Clarkesworld Magazine*, *Strange Horizons*, *J Journal*, *Triggerfish*, and

LandLocked Magazine, among others. His last book is “Oasis” published by Gypsy Shadow. The poetry he translated has been nominated for several Pushcart Prizes.

African American poet, composer, pianist and dramatist, **Beatrice Kujichagulia Greene**, has published poetry in *The Bones We Carry*, *Gemini Magazine* and *Writers Without Margins*. Her piano compositions include *Spirit Warriors*, commissioned by United Nations Women’s Reporting Network, and *The Other* commissioned by Violence Transformed. She dramatizes the life of Frances Harper, a Black woman abolitionist.

Kevin Griffin is an English and Creative Writing teacher at Detroit Catholic Central High School. He lives in Plymouth, Michigan, with his wife and two sons. His chapbook, *Line and Hook*, was published by the Michigan Writers Cooperative Press in 2017. His poetry has been published in *The Broad River Review*, *Common Ground Review*, *The Garfield Lake Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and *Sand Hills Literary Magazine*, among other publications.

Maija Haavisto is a disabled queer Buddhist. She has had two poetry collections published in Finland: *Raskas vesi* (Aviador, 2018) and *Hopeatee* (Oppian, 2020). In English her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in e.g. *Wondrous Real*, *ShabdAaweg Review*, *The North*, *Anomaly*, *Asylum*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *Shoreline of Infinity* and *Kaleidoscope*.

Matthew E. Henry (MEH) is the author of the poetry chapbooks *Teaching While Black* (Main Street Rag) and *Dust & Ashes* (Californios Press). His full-length collection, *the Colored page*, is forthcoming from Sundress Publications. MEH’s poetry appears or is forthcoming in *Autofocus*, *Bending Genres*, *Fare Forward*, *Lucky Jefferson*, *Massachusetts Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Pensive*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry East*, *Relief*, *Shenandoah*, and *Zone 3*. MEH’s an educator who received his MFA, yet continued to spend money he didn’t have completing an MA in theology and a PhD in education. You can find him at www.MEHPoeting.com writing about education, race, religion, and burning oppressive systems to the ground.

Richard Hoffman has published four volumes of poetry, *Without Paradise*; *Gold Star Road*; *Emblem*; and his most recent collection *Noon until Night*, winner of the 2018 Massachusetts Book Award for poetry. His other books include the memoirs *Half the House* and *Love & Fury*, and the story collection *Interference and Other Stories*. He is Emeritus Writer-in-Residence at Emerson College.

Laura Reece Hogan is the author of *Litany of Flights* (Paraclete Press, 2020), winner of the Paraclete Poetry Prize, the chapbook *O Garden-Dweller* (Finishing Line Press), and the nonfiction book *I Live, No Longer I* (Wipf & Stock). A Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee, she is one of ten poets featured in the anthology *In a Strange Land* (Cascade Books). Her poems have appeared in or are forthcoming in *America*, *RHINO*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Whale Road Review*, *Cumberland River Review*, *EcoTheo Review* and other publications. She can be found online at www.laurareecehogan.com.

C. T. Holte grew up without color TV; played along creeks and in cornfields; went to lots of school; and has had gigs as teacher, editor, and less wordy things. He recently migrated to New Mexico; and got a cool electric chainsaw for Christmas. His poetry has been published in *Words*, *Touch*, *California Quarterly*, *Months to Years*, *Pensive*, *The Daily Drunk*, and elsewhere, and has been hung from trees to celebrate the Rio Grande Bosque.

Sharon Jacob is an Embedded Software Engineer hailing from a coastal city, Chennai, in India. When she is not reading, writing or over-working, you can find her doing planks, or introspecting! Her poetry and flash fiction have appeared in Calla Press. You can read more of her work at <https://mymusingsandiblog.wordpress.com/>.

Marc Janssen lives in a house with a wife who likes him and a cat who loathes him. Regardless of that turmoil, his poetry can be found scattered around the world in places like *Pinyon*, *Slant*, *Cirque Journal*, *Off the Coast* and *Poetry Salzburg*. His book, *November Reconsidered* was published by Cirque Press. Janssen also coordinates the Salem Poetry Project, a weekly reading, the annual Salem Poetry Festival, and was a 2020 nominee for Oregon Poet Laureate.

Alison Jennings is a Seattle-based poet who's written poetry since her ninth year, but only began to submit her work after retiring from public school teaching. She has had over 50 poems published internationally, won third place or Honorable Mention in several contests, and was a semi-finalist in the Joy Harjo contest for *Cutthroat Magazine*. Please visit her website at <https://sites.google.com/view/airandfirepoet/home>.

Juan Ramón Jiménez was a Spanish poet, editor, and critic born in Moguer i Andalusia (1881-1958). He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1956 for his lyrical poetry. Jiménez's books of poetry include: *Elejías puras (Pure Elegies)*, *La Soledad Sonora (Sonorous Solitude)*, *Poesía (Poetry)*, and *Belleza (Beauty)*.

Laura Anella Johnson is the author of *Not Yet* (Kelsay Books, 2019) and *The Color of Truth* (Kelsay Books, 2022) in which her poem, "Toward the Light," was first published. Her poems have been published in a range of print and online journals and anthologies including *Snakeskin*, *Literary Mama*, *Reach of Song*, and *Tipton*. She holds an MFA from Fairfield University and teaches English/ESOL at Fayette County High School in Georgia where she sponsors The Unleashed Pens creative writing club. She also facilitates the monthly writers' workshop Lines Between the Wines at Warm Springs Cellars in Warm Springs, GA. Website: laurajohnsonpoet.org. Facebook: lauraanella67

Huda Khwaja is an American Muslim attorney and environmental legal fellow based in Vermont. She channels her human rights and social justice background through prioritizing storytelling, environmental justice, and coalition-building in her work. In her free time, Huda enjoys writing, reading everything she can get her hands on, drinking coffee, playing with cats, and enjoying the stunning Vermont mountains and Lake Champlain views. Huda is a graduate of Agnes Scott College in Decatur, GA and Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, MA.

A former Pulitzer finalist and winner of the Poets' Prize, **Sydney Lea** served as founding editor of *New England Review* and was Vermont's Poet Laureate from 2011 to 2015. He is the author of 23 books, the latest *Seen from All Sides: Lyric and Everyday Life*, essays; fourteen of these volumes are poetry collections, the most

recent of which is *Here* (Four Way Books, NYC, 2019). In 2021, he was presented with his home state of Vermont's most prestigious artist's distinction: the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Serge Lecomte was born in Belgium. He emigrated to Brooklyn in 1960. After graduating high school, he became a medic in the Air Force. He earned a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in Russian Literature, worked as a Green Beret language instructor and received a B.A. in Spanish Literature from the University of Alaska where he taught from 1978-1997. He built houses, worked as a pipefitter, orderly, landscaper, driller, bartender. He is also a published poet, novelist, playwright and artist.

Cristina Legarda was born in the Philippines and spent her early childhood there before moving to Bethesda, Maryland. She is a practicing physician in Boston and enjoys writing about women's lived experience, cultural issues, medicine, and finding grace in a challenging world. Her work has appeared in *America magazine*, *The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *Dappled Things*, *The Dewdrop*, *Plainsongs*, *FOLIO*, *HeartWood*, *The Good Life Review*, and others.

Deborah Leipziger is a poet, author, and advisor on sustainability. Her chapbook, *Flower Map*, was published by Finishing Line Press (2013). Three of her poems have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Born in Brazil, Ms. Leipziger is the author of several books on sustainability and human rights, some of which have been translated into Chinese, Korean, and Portuguese. Her poems have been published in the UK, US, Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Israel and the Netherlands, in such magazines and journals as *Pangyrus*, *Salamander*, *Lily Poetry Review*, and *Revista Cardenal*. She is the co-founder of *Soul-Lit*, an on-line poetry magazine. Her new collection of poems is forthcoming in 2023 through Lily Poetry Review Books.

Tracy Lightsey is from the mountains of Western Colorado, where he lives, teaches, farms, and practices massage therapy. He studied at the University of Northern Colorado with James Doyle and with Aaron Abeyta at Western State University.

Michael Lyle is the author of the poetry chapbook, *The Everywhere of Light* (Plan B Press, 2018) and his poems have appeared widely, including *Atlanta Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Plainsongs* and *Poetry East*. Three of his creative nonfiction essays were winners of the Buechner Narrative Writing Project and published in *The Christian Century*. In retirement from ordained ministry, Michael lives in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. <http://www.michaellylewriter.com>.

Professor of English at Lock Haven University, **Marjorie Maddox** has published 13 collections of poetry—including *Transplant*, *Transport*, *Transubstantiation*, *Begin with a Question*, and *Heart Speaks, Is Spoken For*, an ekphrastic collaboration with photographer Karen Elias—the short story collection *What She Was Saying*; 4 children's/YA books—including *Inside Out: Poems on Writing and Reading Poems with Insider Exercises & I'm Feeling Blue, Too!*—*Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania* (PSU Press), and *Presence* (assistant editor). www.marjoriemaddox.com.

Boo Mangiacotti is a world traveler and poet and located in Boston, MA. Her work centers around self discovery and navigating the world as a young adult. She believes in the power of writing to connect with others and hopes to one day publish a book of prose. She is currently studying international relations & law at Emmanuel College.

Eva Margueriette received a BFA from California Institute of the Arts in 1967 and has been a portrait/landscape painter and private instructor of drawing and painting all her life. In 2007, she began taking creative writing courses at the University of Iowa Summer Writing Festival, continuing her independent study with several published authors and workshops at Yale, Stanford, and elsewhere. This is the first submission of any part of her yet-to-be-published memoir about a deaf artist living with an alcoholic husband and schizophrenic son who transforms everyone's life when she reclaims her creativity.

Blissfully retired in Clackamas, OR, **Carolyn Martin** is a lover of gardening and snorkeling, feral cats and backyard birds, writing and photography. Her poems have

appeared in more than 175 journals throughout North America, Australia, and the UK. She is the poetry editor of *Kosmos Quarterly: journal for global transformation*. Find out more at www.carolynmartinpoet.com.

Sandeep Kumar Mishra is a bestselling author of *One Heart—Many Breaks-2020*, An outsider artist, a poet and a lecturer. He is a guest poetry editor at *Indian Poetry Review*. He has received the “Readers Favorite Silver Award-21,” “Indian Achievers Award-21,” IPR Annual Poetry Award-2020 and Literary Titan Book Award-2020. He was shortlisted for “2021 International Book Awards,” “Indies Today Book of the Year Award 2020” and “Joy Bale Boone Poetry Prize 2021” and “Opelle Rise Up Poetry Prize 2021”. He was also “The Story Mirror Author of the Year” nominee-2019. More information - <https://www.sandeepkumarmishra.com/>.

After fifty years plying the waters of ministry, industry, and education, **Joseph Murray** found his vocation as a writer at age sixty five. His work has appeared in *Branches* (and Best of Branches), *Common Ground*, *Nebo*, *Sin Fronteras*; and anthologized in *Missing Persons: Reflections on Dementia*. In other literary forums he has been a book co-editor, editorialist, essayist, and book reviewer.

Laurence Musgrove is a Texas writer, teacher, and editor. His previous books include *Local Bird* – a poetry collection, *One Kind of Recording* – a volume of aphorisms, and *The Bluebonnet Sutras* – Buddhist dialogues in verse, all from Lamar University Literary Press. Professor of English at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas, he teaches courses in composition, literature, and creative writing. Laurence is also editor of *Texas Poetry Assignment*, a non-profit arts organization inspiring community through hunger relief and poetry in Texas.

Guliz Mutlu. 1978. Turkey. Artist. Poetess. Francophone. Renée Vivien Prize. Grand Prize of Francophone Poetry (The Society of Poets and Artist of France). Jean Aicard Prize. UNESCO’s World Poetry Mention Prize. PostDoc from Pompeu Fabra University, Spain. Twitter @bl3y8

Jaimeson Oakley is a Queer/Transgender (He/They) writer from the hills of Lucasville, Ohio. He is currently a poetry student of the Northeastern Ohio MFA

creative writing program. Their motivation for creating is always to connect with others.

Tansy Julie Soaring Eagle Paschold lives in Norfolk, Nebraska. They are self-described as an anxious alcoholic bipolar gender fluid queer poet and artist with C-PTSD, sensory sensitivity and borderline lupus who likes critters, plants, and soil. They are a twin and a mama. They have two degrees in soil science. Julie sells their sketches at the Ravenwood Art Gallery in Norfolk, NE. For more, read <https://medium.com/@jpaschold> or <https://jpaschold.blogspot.com/>.

Patricia Peters is a Canadian writer who has lived many years in Latin America. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing and teaches communication. Her work has appeared in *CV2*, *Entropy*, *On The Seawall* and elsewhere.

Remi Recchia is a trans poet and essayist from Kalamazoo, Michigan. He is a Ph.D. student in English-Creative Writing at Oklahoma State University. He currently serves as an associate editor for the *Cimarron Review*. A three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, Remi's work has appeared or will soon appear in *Columbia Online Journal*, *Harpur Palate*, and *Juked*, among others. He holds an MFA in poetry from Bowling Green State University. Remi's first full-length poetry collection, *Quicksand/Stargazing*, was published with Cooper Dillon Books in 2021.

James Redfern was born and raised in Long Beach, California. Redfern is a graduate of Grinnell College. His poetry has appeared in *High Shelf*, *Beatific Magazine*, *The Raw Art Review*, *Transcend*, *We Are Antifa (anthology, Into the Void)*, *2020: Good Writing from a Bad Year (anthology, Dutch Kills Press)*, *Verity La: The Clozapine Clinic*, *Dime Show Review*, *Swimming with Elephants*, *Montana Mouthful*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Great Lakes Poetry Press*, *Fear and Loathing in Long Beach*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Passengers Journal*, *DoveTales*, *Genre: Urban Arts* (forthcoming), and elsewhere.

Tatiana Retivov received a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Montana and an M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literature from the University of Michigan. She has lived in Kyiv, Ukraine since 1994, where she runs an Art & Literature Salon

and a small publishing press, kayalabooks.com that publishes prose, poetry, and non-fiction in Ukraine.

Andrew Monroe Rice is a writer, men's contemplative retreat leader and spiritual director living in Oklahoma City. He has a Master's degree from Harvard Divinity School, 1999. He served as an Oklahoma State Senator from 2006 to 2012. He founded the online new site, *NonDoc*. www.resentmentville.com

Mary Anne Rojas is a Global Public Health graduate student at New York University. They feel close to death and admire a focus on how impact is woven into metaphors and risk. They spend time alone imagining what love looks like in light form.

Kathryn Sadakierski is a 22-year-old writer whose work has been published in anthologies, magazines, and literary journals around the world, including *Critical Read*, *Halfway Down the Stairs*, *Literature Today*, *NewPages Blog*, *Northern New England Review*, *seashores: an international journal to share the spirit of haiku*, *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art and Healing*, *Yellow Arrow Journal*, and elsewhere. Her micro-chapbook "Travels through New York" was published by Origami Poems Project (2020). Kathryn collects vinyl records, vintage books, and memories, which inspire her art. She graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. and M.S. from Bay Path University in Longmeadow, Massachusetts.

Leslie Schultz (Northfield, MN) has three collections of poetry, *Still Life with Poppies: Elegies*; *Cloud Song*; and *Concertina* (Kelsay Books) and a chapbook, *Larks at Sunrise: Light-hearted Poems for Dark Times* (Green Gingko Press). Her poetry is in many journals, such as *Able Muse*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Light*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *One Art*, *Poet Lore*, *Third Wednesday*, *The Madison Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *The Orchards*, *Tipton Poetry Review*, and *The Wayfarer*. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2017. In 2020, she was guest associate editor for *Third Wednesday*. In 2021, she served as a judge for the Maria W. Faust Sonnet Contest. winonamedia.net.

Sarah Dickenson Snyder lives in Vermont, carves in stone, & rides her bike. Travel opens her eyes. She has three poetry collections, *The Human Contract* (2017),

Notes from a Nomad (nominated for the Massachusetts Book Awards 2018), and *With a Polaroid Camera* (2019) with recent work in *Rattle*, *Lily Poetry Review*, and *RHINO*. sarahdickensonsnyder.com

Mark Stucky has degrees in religious studies, pastoral ministry, and communications. After being a pastor, he moved into communications and has been a technical and freelance writer for three decades. During his day job, he has documented diverse products, including satellite communications, power amplifiers, and building automation controls. During evenings and weekends, he has had one book and well over a hundred articles, stories, and poems published on a multitude of topics, including cinema, computers, communications, spirituality, and science fiction. He has received over three dozen writing and publication awards. For more information, see [linkedin.com/in/markstucky](https://www.linkedin.com/in/markstucky).

Edward Michael Supranowicz is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in *Fish Food*, *Streetlight*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Door Is a Jar*, *The Phoenix*, and other journals. Edward is also a published poet.

Samy Swayd is a retired adjunct faculty from San Diego State University (SDSU) with BA and MA from the University of Washington (UW) and a Ph.D. from the University of California (UCLA); his teaching in several southern California universities included courses on Spirituality and the Ecology, Comparative Mysticism, Social Sufism, and American Religious Diversity; he is presently completing a book on spirituality and goodness.

Wally Swist's books include *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), selected by Yusef Komunyakaa as co-winner in the 2011 Crab Orchard Series Open Poetry Contest, and *A Bird Who Seems to Know Me: Poems Regarding Birds & Nature* (Ex Ophidia Press, 2019), the winner of the 2018 Ex Ophidia Press Poetry Prize. Recent books of poetry include *The Bees of the Invisible* (2019), *Evanescence: Selected Poems* (2020), *Awakening & Visitation* (2020), and *Taking Residence* (2021), all with Shanti Arts. Forthcoming

books include, *A Writer's Statements on Beauty: Selected Essays & Reviews* and a translation of Giuseppe Ungaretti's *L'Allegria*, with Shanti Arts.

Denise Thompson-Slaughter is a Maryland-born writer and retired academic editor living near Rochester, NY. Her published work includes a chapbook and two full books of poetry, a mystery novella, a book of research on and personal experiences of the paranormal, a couple of short stories, and a handful of brief memoir pieces. Her website is <https://www.denisethompson-slaughter.com>

Emily Updegraff lives near Chicago. She studied genetics and then turned her attention to working in university administration, mothering, reading widely, and writing poetry. She is just beginning to find ways to share her poems.

Pamela Wax's poems have received awards through *Crosswinds*, *Paterson Literary Review*, Robinson Jeffers Tor House, and *Oberon* and can be found online in journals including *Pensive*, *Heron Tree*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Pedestal*, *Pangyrus*, *The Dewdrop*, *Sixfold*, *Solstice*, *Persimmon Tree*, and *Passengers Journal*. Pam is the author of *Walking the Labyrinth* (Main Street Rag Publishing, 2022); her chapbook *Starter Mothers* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She is a rabbi who walks labyrinths in the Bronx, NY and the Northern Berkshires of Massachusetts and can be found at www.pamelawax.com.

Ron Welburn's poems have recently appeared in *The Common* and *The Common Online*; *The Qutub Minar Review*, and *Brilliant Corners*. His seventh collection of poems is *Council Decisions: Revised and Expanded Edition*, (Bowman Books/Greenfield Review Press, 2012). In 2017 he was a returning participant at the 25th Anniversary of Returning the Gift Native and Indigenous Literary Festival at Oklahoma University. He is now an emeritus professor in the English department at UMass Amherst where he taught American literatures, Native American studies, and critical writing.

Pediatrician **Kelley White** has worked in inner city Philadelphia and rural New Hampshire. Her poems have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Rattle* and *JAMA*. Her recent book is *Two Birds in Flame* (Beech River Books). She received a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant.

Mike Wilson's work has appeared in magazines including *Agape*, *Cagibi Literary Journal*, *The London Reader*, *The Aureorean*, *The Ocotillo Review*, and in Mike's book, *Arranging Deck Chairs on the Titanic*, (Rabbit House Press, 2020), political poetry for a post-truth world. Mike lives in Central Kentucky.

Hanna Marie Dean Wright is a self taught artist residing in Keavy, Kentucky. She uses her experiences from growing up in rural Southeastern Kentucky, teaching special education classes, and living with obsessive compulsive disorder to inspire her unique works of art. Hanna Wright uses bold lines and bright colors to create abstract figures with relatable and at times deeply emotional expressions. Hanna was born in Barbourville, Kentucky on April 15th, 1993. Hanna graduated from the University of the Cumberlands in 2015 with degrees in Special Education Behavioral Disabilities and Elementary Education.

Anne Yarbrough's first collection, *Refinery* (Broadkill River Press), was chosen by Hayden Saunier for the 2021 Dogfish Head Poetry Prize. Her poems have been or will be in *Poet Lore*, *Delmarva Review*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *CALYX Journal*, and elsewhere. She lives along the lower Delaware River.