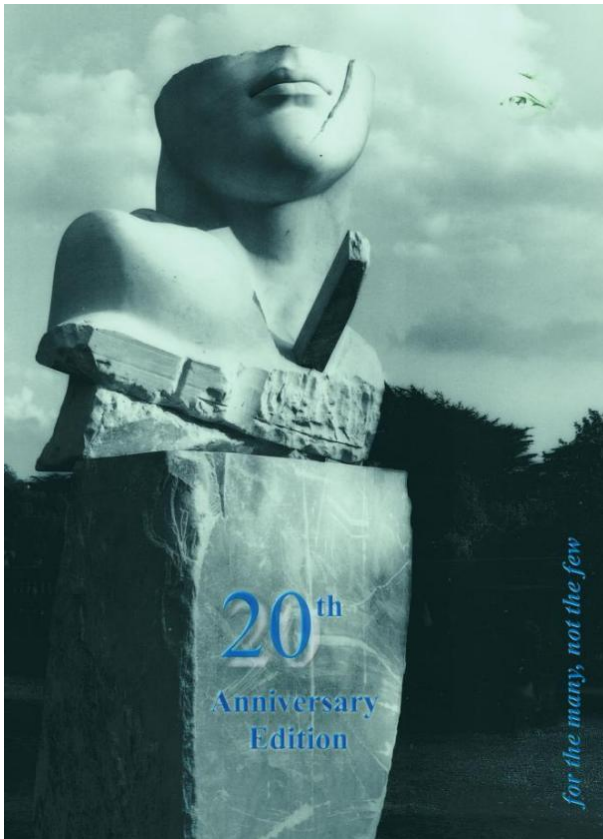


For the many, not the few

POETiCA REViEW

Issue (20)



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“All souls love, hurt, feel lonely, weep. All souls embody the infinite.
And so it is, we reach out to connect and reconnect, not with just one
soul but a billion souls at once.”

Mark A. Murphy

20th Anniversary
Edition

Winter 2023

Issue 20

Chief Editor: **Mark A. Murphy**
Assistant Editor: **Kieran M. Conway**

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POETiCA REVIEW

A pluriverse of poetic possibilities.

POETiCA REVIEW
For the many, not just the few.



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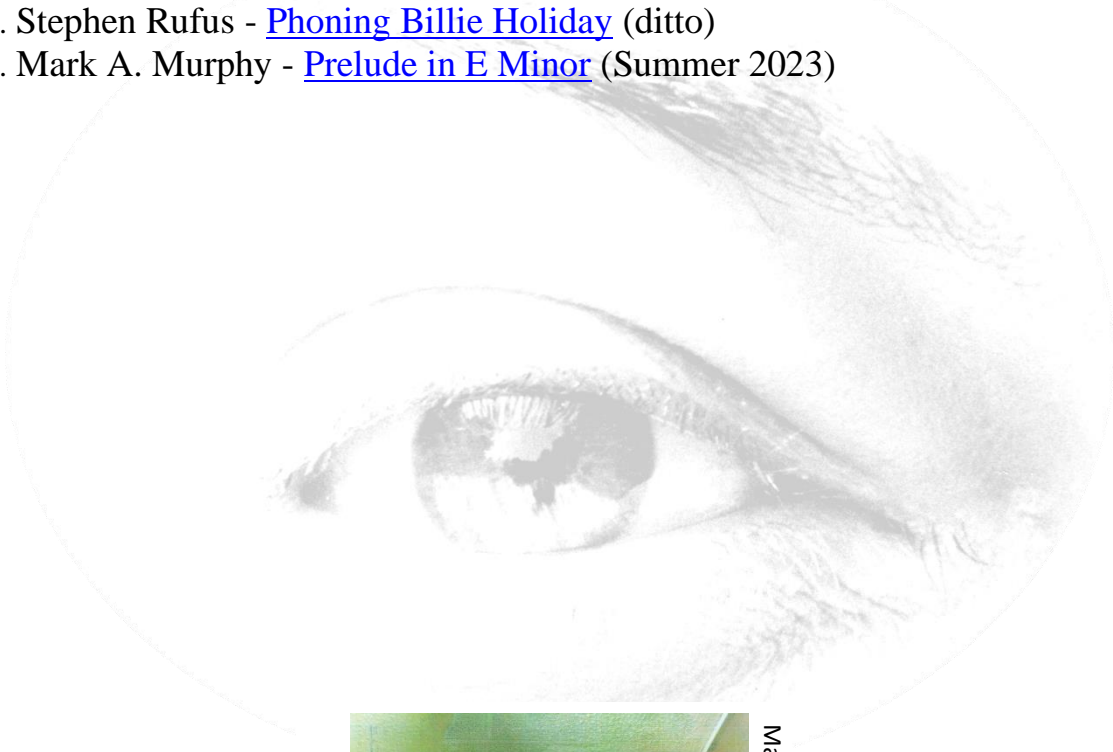
Watch this space in 2024 for **POETiCA BRIEF**, where we will be bringing all things poetry to 4K video on our own dedicated YouTube channel...



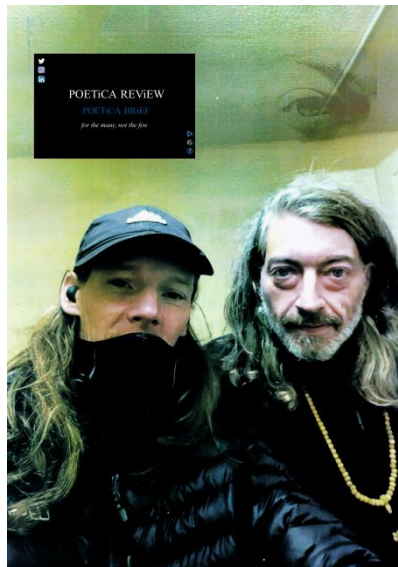
Pushcart Nominations 2023

POETiCA REViEW Asst. Editor, **Kieran M. Conway**, has nominated the following poets for the 2024 Pushcart Prize from poems that have been published over the past year in our online literary journal:
www.poeticareview.co.uk

1. Nora L. Hollin - [Antenatal](#) (Autumn 2023)
2. Antonis Balasopoulos - [The Raven](#) (Spring/Summer 2023)
3. Antonis Balasopolous - [The Birth of History in Herodotus](#) (ditto)
4. Stephen Rufus - [Otto Frank, Amsterdam, 1960](#) (Spring/Summer 2023)
5. Stephen Rufus - [Phoning Billie Holiday](#) (ditto)
6. Mark A. Murphy - [Prelude in E Minor](#) (Summer 2023)



Kieran M. Conway Asst. Editor



Mark A. Murphy Editor

Nora L. Hollin 1 poem

ANTENATAL

See here in the ice: the body curling,
twine becoming flame
becoming bone. Alchemist. Anarchist.
Tidy piles of snow.
Hoary puddles of blood.
The sloppy arts of creation. Violence.
Smells like oil
and sulphur and semen.
Fingers working over the prelude on keys or strings,
like strokes or gashes.

I have travelled hard through many graves to touch you.
See here, what was once thought of
as the rainbow blast of the first ripe meadow
where horses broke through
faery tale – blinded
by fresh, thrashing reins – is now mourned as childhood undone.
The very moment when fleshy hands came to know
the cold weight of forestock and trigger.
The bitter cold of creation. The metallic scent and mess
of want. I will reach you from here.

My hands are open,
my hands, my
hands,
my hands of snow.

So empty.

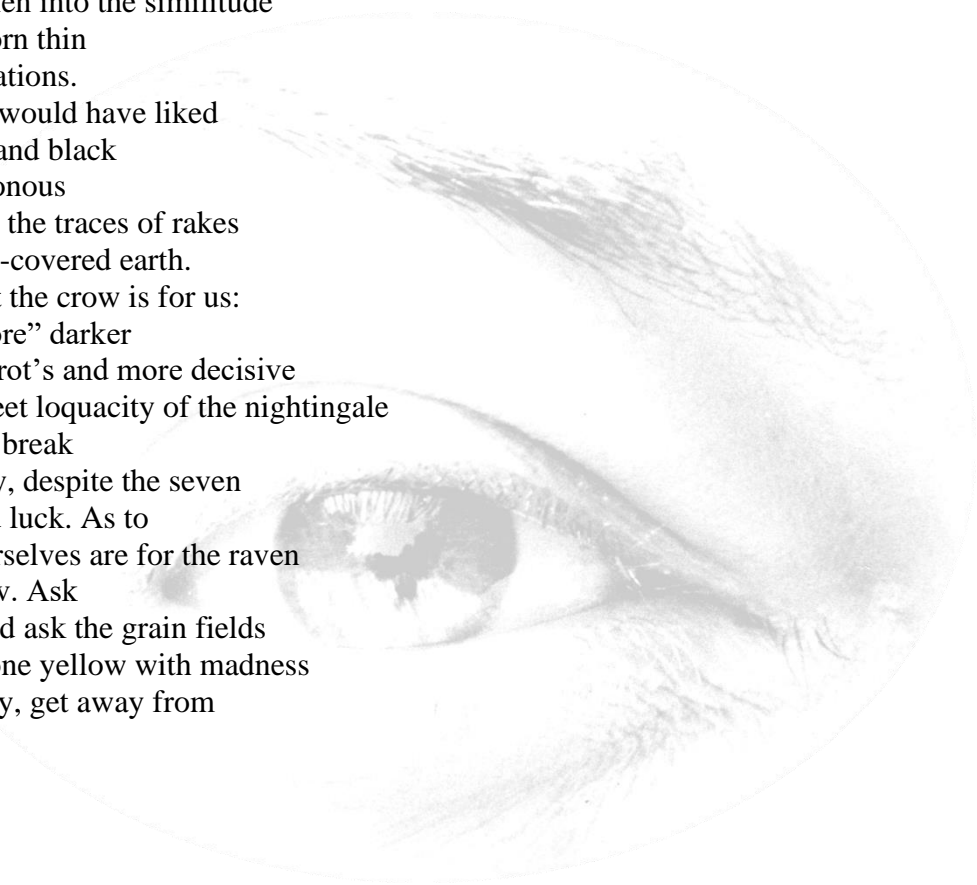
Unclean.



Antonis Balasopoulos 2 poems

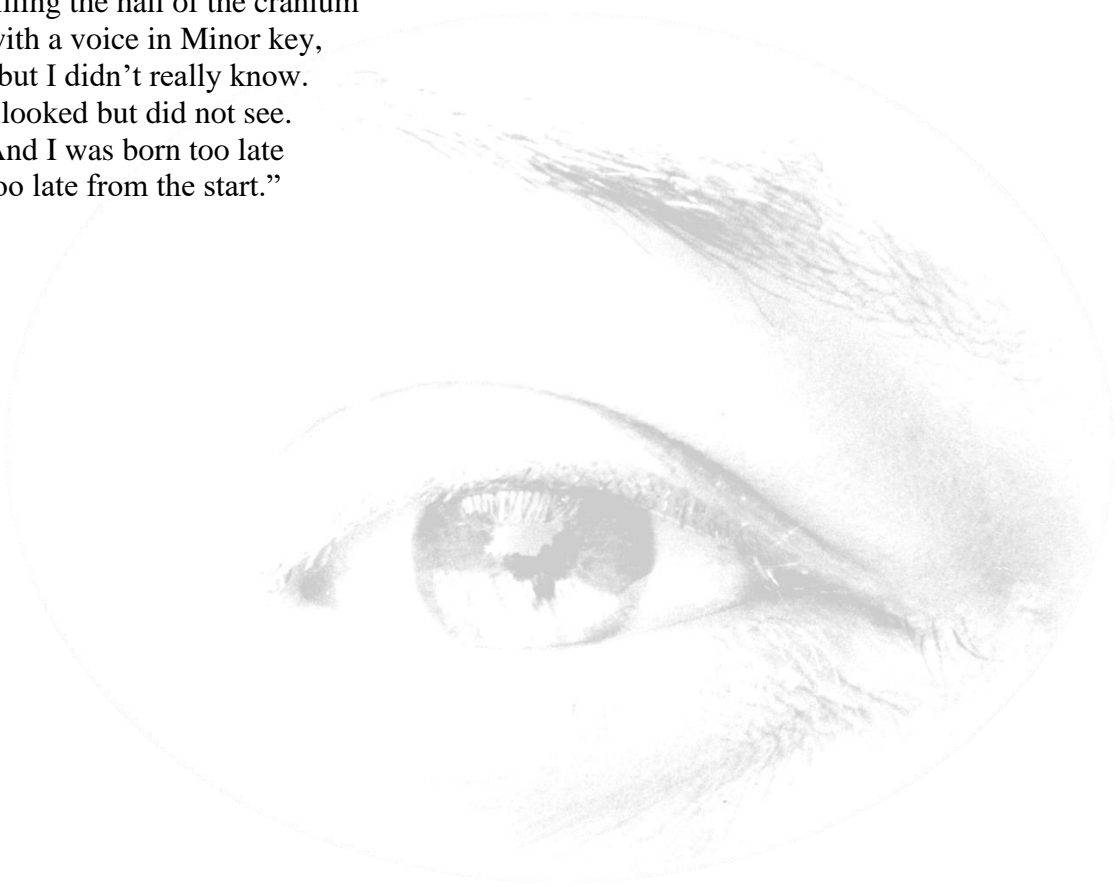
The Raven

The raven is a kind of parody;
a winged vandalism
at the expense of the letter.
Because, though we were created
in the image of a face,
we have fallen into the similitude
of a sign worn thin
by interpretations.
And so, we would have liked
to be shiny and black
and cacophonous
and to leave the traces of rakes
on the snow-covered earth.
This is what the crow is for us:
A “nevermore” darker
than the parrot’s and more decisive
than the sweet loquacity of the nightingale
a mirror we break
intentionally, despite the seven
years of bad luck. As to
what we ourselves are for the raven
I don’t know. Ask
the wires and ask the grain fields
that have gone yellow with madness
and get away, get away from
this poem.



The Birth of History in Herodotus

Onesilus taught me two things
about the nature of history: the first is a buzz,
like that between stations in A.M radio—
cries, threnodies, words
from which the articulation is missing.
The second is a bitter aftertaste in honey,
the thought, in other words, mechanically
deposited by bees as they labour
in the empty skull.
“I was aware”, this thought says,
filling the hall of the cranium
with a voice in Minor key,
“but I didn’t really know.
I looked but did not see.
And I was born too late
too late from the start.”



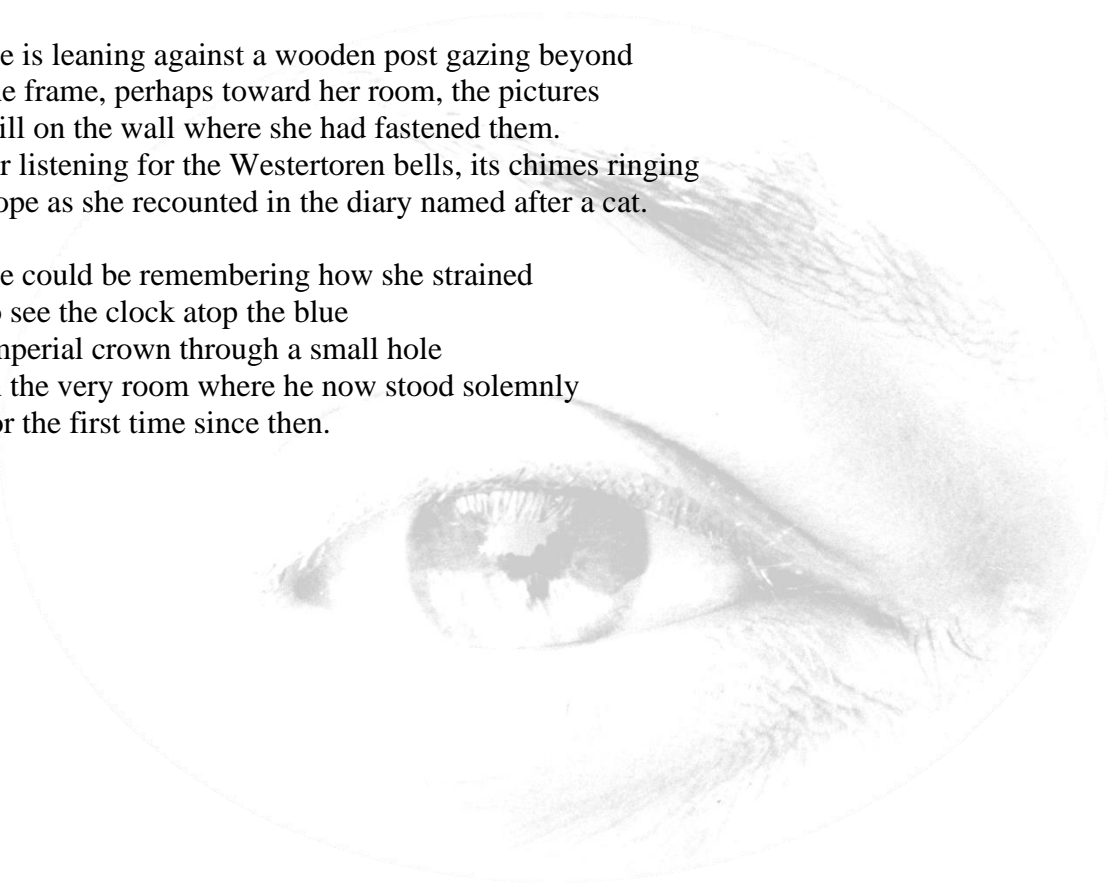
Stephen Rufus 2 poems

OTTO FRANK, AMSTERDAM, 1960

In the photo he had already walked through
the shadow door that hid the stairs
to the secret annex and the scene of their betrayal.
The floor creaked as it did then when all would be
still and silent as a hummingbird until evening.

He is leaning against a wooden post gazing beyond
the frame, perhaps toward her room, the pictures
still on the wall where she had fastened them.
Or listening for the Westertoren bells, its chimes ringing
hope as she recounted in the diary named after a cat.

He could be remembering how she strained
to see the clock atop the blue
imperial crown through a small hole
in the very room where he now stood solemnly
for the first time since then.



PHONING BILLIE HOLIDAY

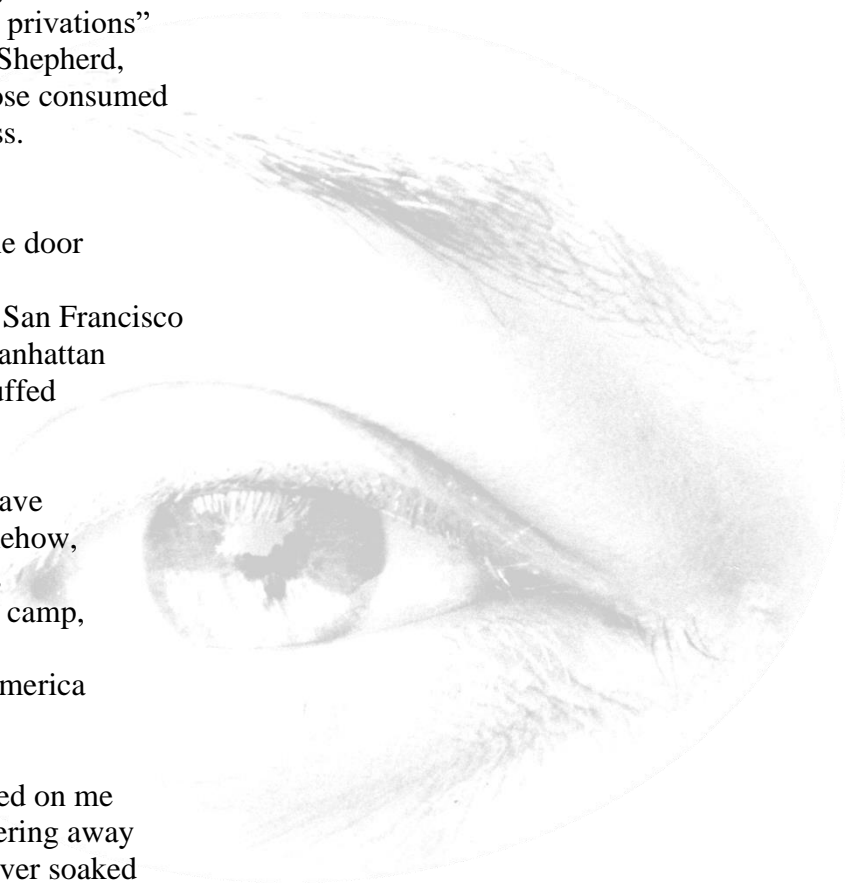
I found you, sweet Eleanora
of the gardenias, with your voice
of pure nicotine,
in a 1940s phone book,
wishing I could dial
Edgecomb 4-4058, or swing by
at 286 W. 142nd Street
the center of the universe.

Had I been your lover man
I would have rescued you
from “the assaults and privations”
at the House of Good Shepherd,
kept you safe from those consumed
by your well of sadness.

No matter what
I would have bolted the door
against the vice
at The Mark Twain in San Francisco
or at the hospital in Manhattan
where you laid handcuffed
to your bed.

Lord knows I would have
accompanied you somehow,
sure as Bobby Tucker,
to the Alderson prison camp,
with the whole of
the United States of America
against you.
All this I swear.
You could have counted on me
to stick with you withering away
from the blues, your liver soaked
in copper.

For I know, although
not as well as you,
what a little moonlight can do
to help us get by.



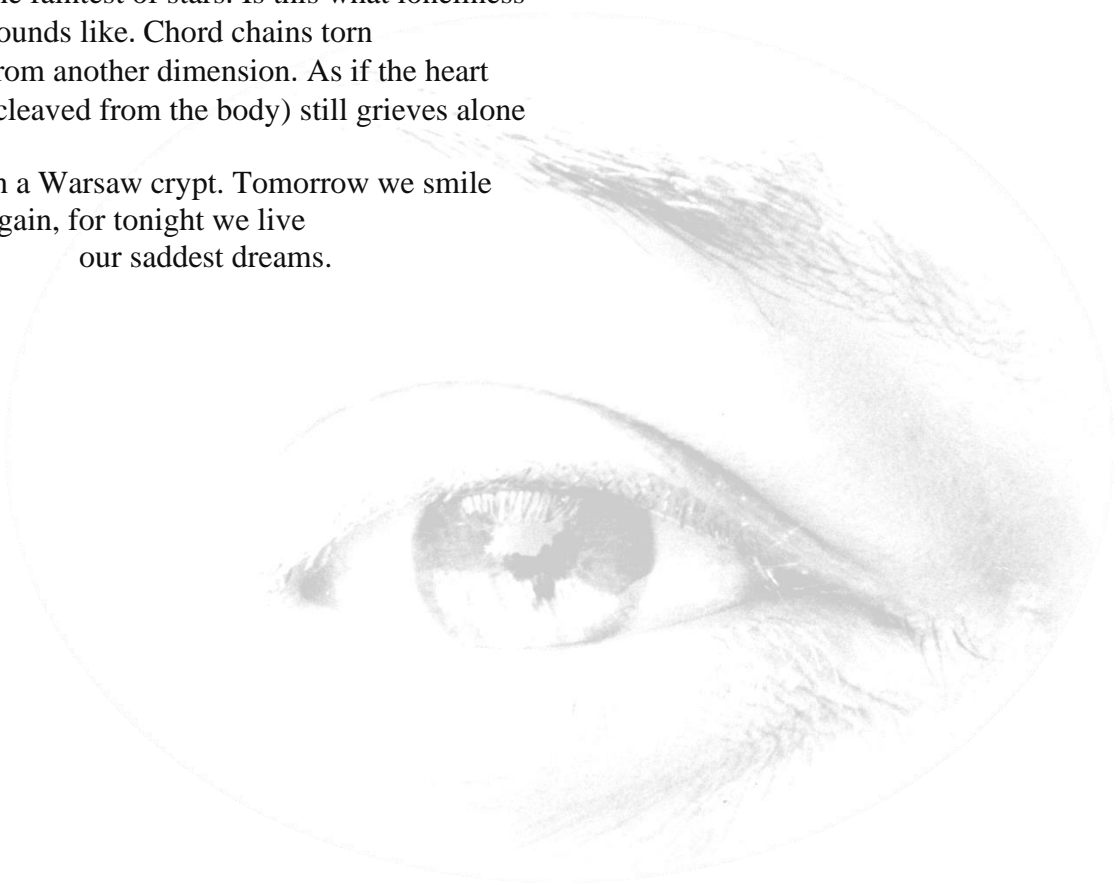
Mark A. Murphy 1 poem

Prelude in E Minor

What is this sadness that invites us
to withdraw into the magic
of minor keys. Are we the astronomers
of descending melodies, discovering

the faintest of stars. Is this what loneliness
sounds like. Chord chains torn
from another dimension. As if the heart
(cleaved from the body) still grieves alone

in a Warsaw crypt. Tomorrow we smile
again, for tonight we live
our saddest dreams.



POETiCA REViEW

Winter 2023/2024

20th Anniversary Edition

POEMS



POETiCA REViEW

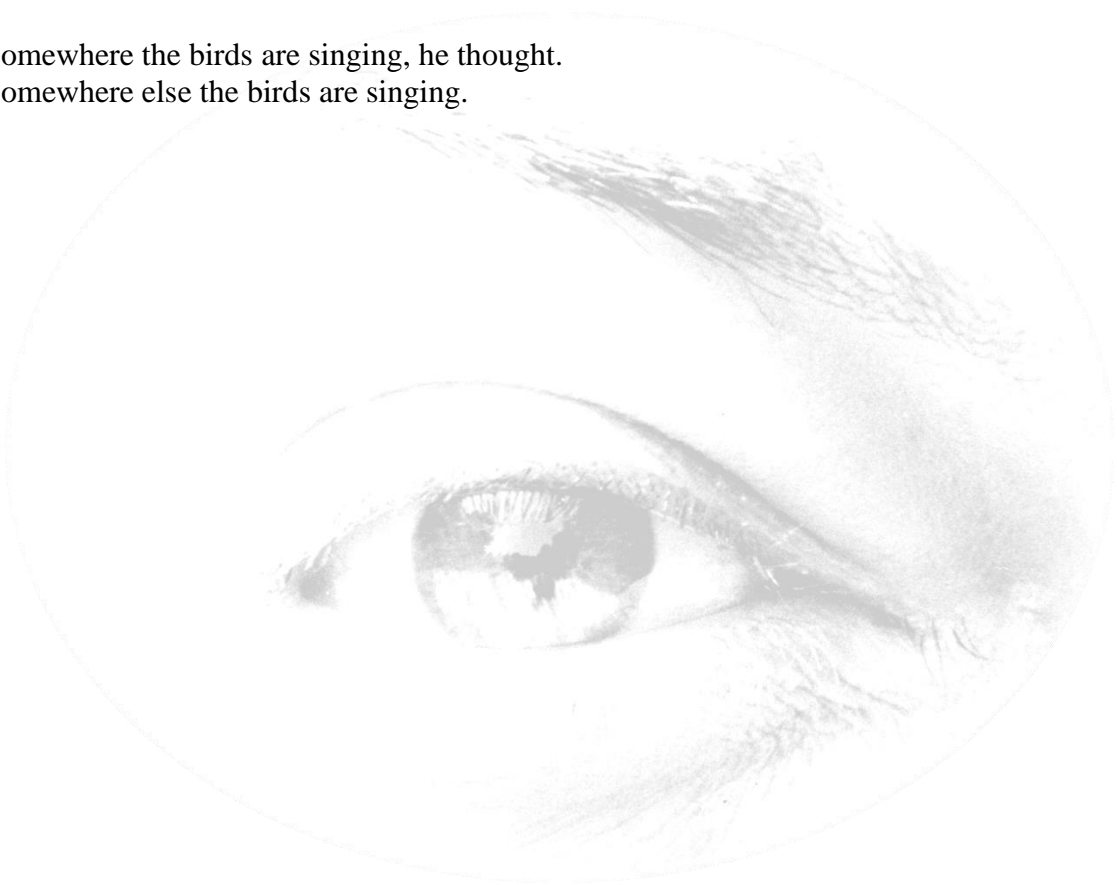
for the many, not the few

Lynn White 2 poems

Somewhere The Birds Are Singing

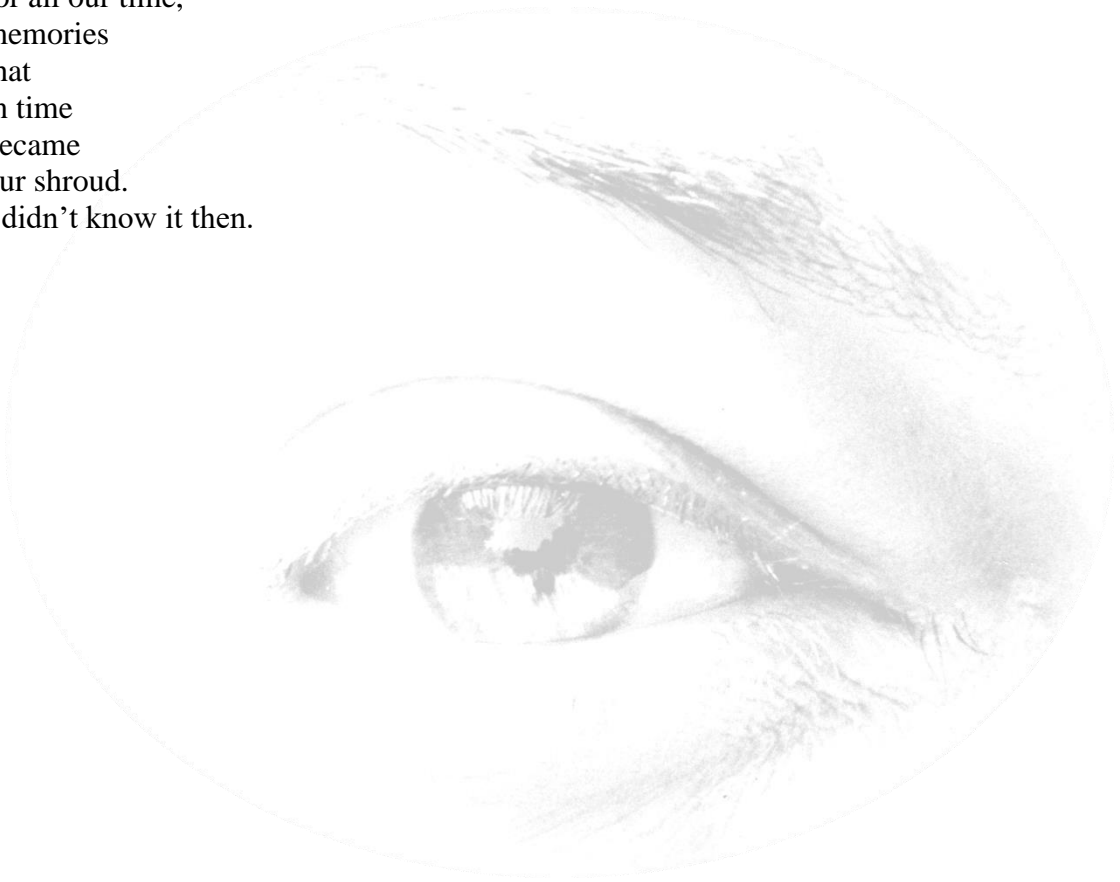
He managed to open the shutters a little way
but the gap was smaller than he expected.
He eased his head and shoulders inside.
The rest of him, his arse and legs
remained outside covered in a blanket
Then, as dawn broke, covered once more
by a blanket of early spring snow.

Somewhere the birds are singing, he thought.
Somewhere else the birds are singing.



Cloth of Gold

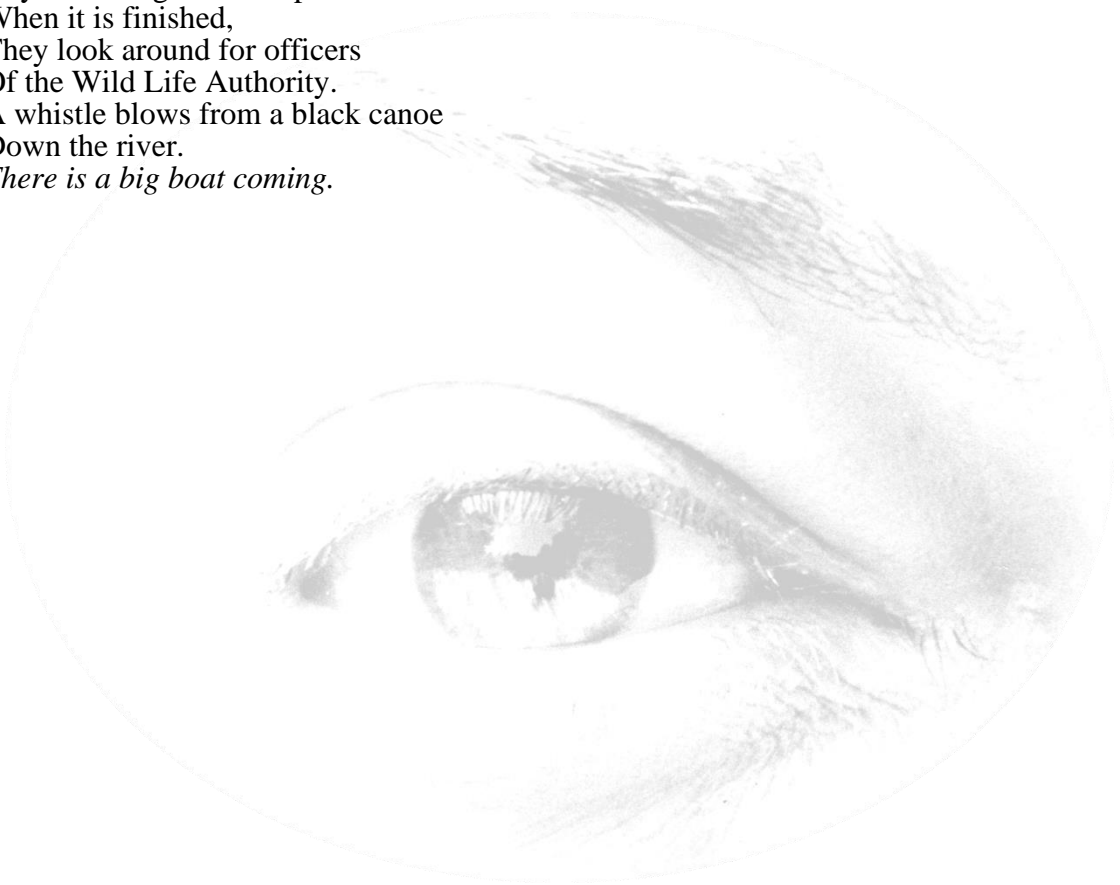
I called it my cloth of gold
it was so special
with its Muga silk
and pearl purl
remnants reclaimed
and woven with love
woven with tenderness
into a cloth of a brave new dawn
making memories to wear
wrap round memories
like threads of time
for all our time,
memories
that
in time
became
our shroud.
I didn't know it then.



Marial Awendit 2 poems

The Turtle

The boys assemble
Over the wet turtle,
Thrown out of the river
By the fishermen.
The voting has three of the five
Boys claiming ownership.
When it is finished,
They look around for officers
Of the Wild Life Authority.
A whistle blows from a black canoe
Down the river.
There is a big boat coming.



Tulips

I bypassed you tending red tulips,
Because these hands mend broken things
And you are not broken.

The tulips did not ask to be tended,
And the sun above them did not ask
To be applauded.



Enno de Witt 1 poem

Winter Stable

Huddled together our coats matted
and tangled night after night we recite
bleating softly the long history
of our flock, cracks in the roof caulked

with pitch and straw, sweet smell of hay
in the winter stable protects us
from the freezing fog outside and within
in our entangled wool we shelter

warmth and oblivion.

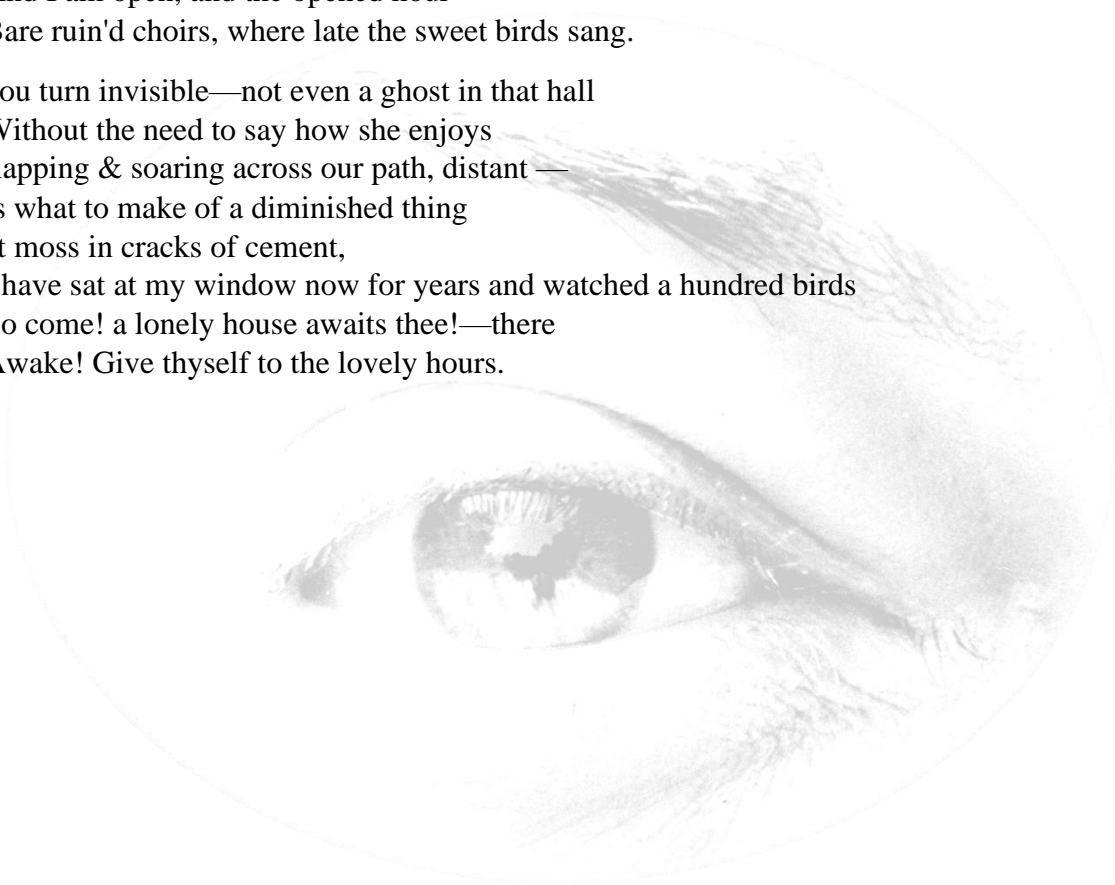


Cathy Thwing 2 poems

Cento: On Retirement

I went along the river—alone in the moonlight
Continuous as the stars that shine
part out of longing, part daring my self,
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
And I am open, and the opened hour
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

you turn invisible—not even a ghost in that hall
Without the need to say how she enjoys
flapping & soaring across our path, distant —
Is what to make of a diminished thing
at moss in cracks of cement,
I have sat at my window now for years and watched a hundred birds
So come! a lonely house awaits thee!—there
Awake! Give thyself to the lovely hours.



Speckled Stone Cairns

Here is the queue for the toll path.
Through dark woods, you'll find the troll path.

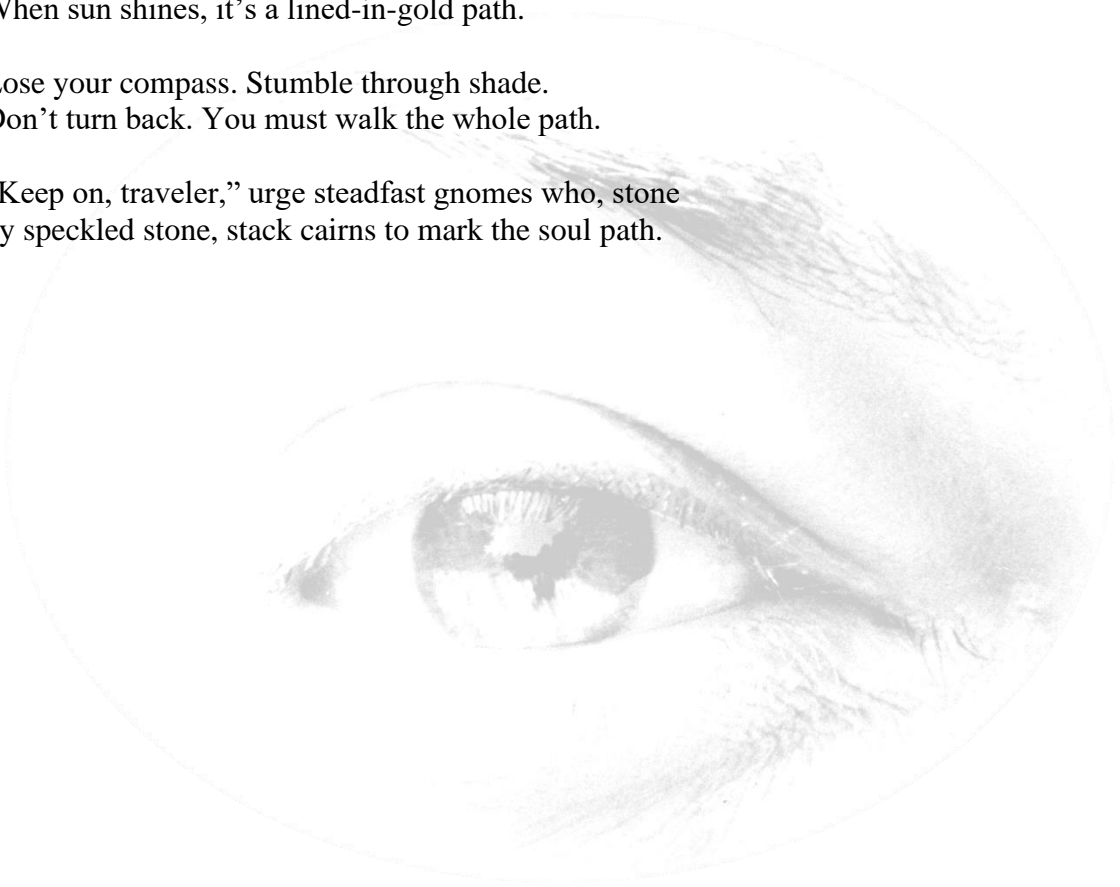
Had you pockets full of quarters
you'd still choose the bold path.

Gossips whisper, *Follow the crowd,*
get in line. Pursue the chase-your-goal path.

But wander this way, where buttercups bloom.
When sun shines, it's a lined-in-gold path.

Lose your compass. Stumble through shade.
Don't turn back. You must walk the whole path.

"Keep on, traveler," urge steadfast gnomes who, stone
by speckled stone, stack cairns to mark the soul path.



Douglas Colston 1 poem

Watercolor Robot Bearing Flowers

Water: one of five elements in Chinese philosophy
and medicine. To some: fluid, or flooding.
A source of income or worthless.

Coloring: variegated colors. Graceful or brilliant.
Artistic talent.
And perhaps, a kind of lottery prize.

Machine: process; cause or reason. Opportunity.
And for a few,
quick-witted plans and ideas.

Utensil: tools or devices. Organs. Capacity or tolerance.
And possibly highly regarded.

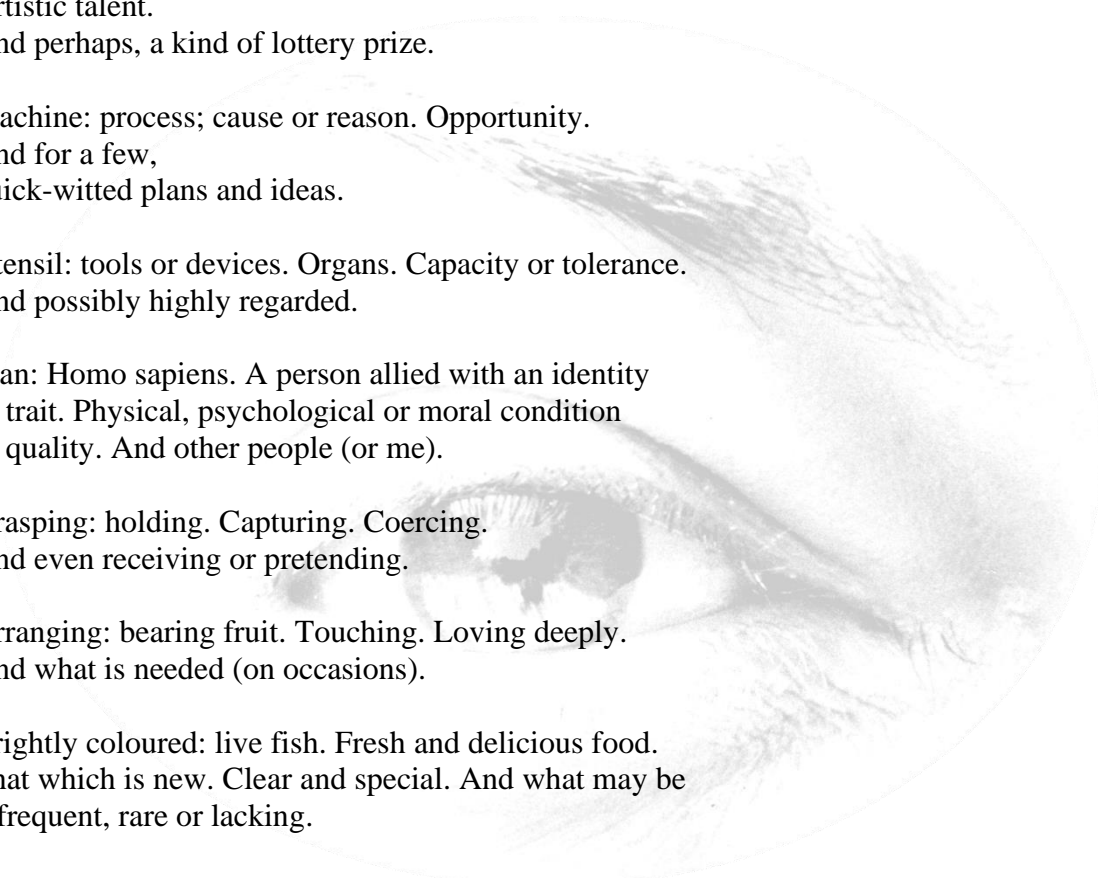
Man: Homo sapiens. A person allied with an identity
or trait. Physical, psychological or moral condition
or quality. And other people (or me).

Grasping: holding. Capturing. Coercing.
And even receiving or pretending.

Arranging: bearing fruit. Touching. Loving deeply.
And what is needed (on occasions).

Brightly coloured: live fish. Fresh and delicious food.
That which is new. Clear and special. And what may be
infrequent, rare or lacking.

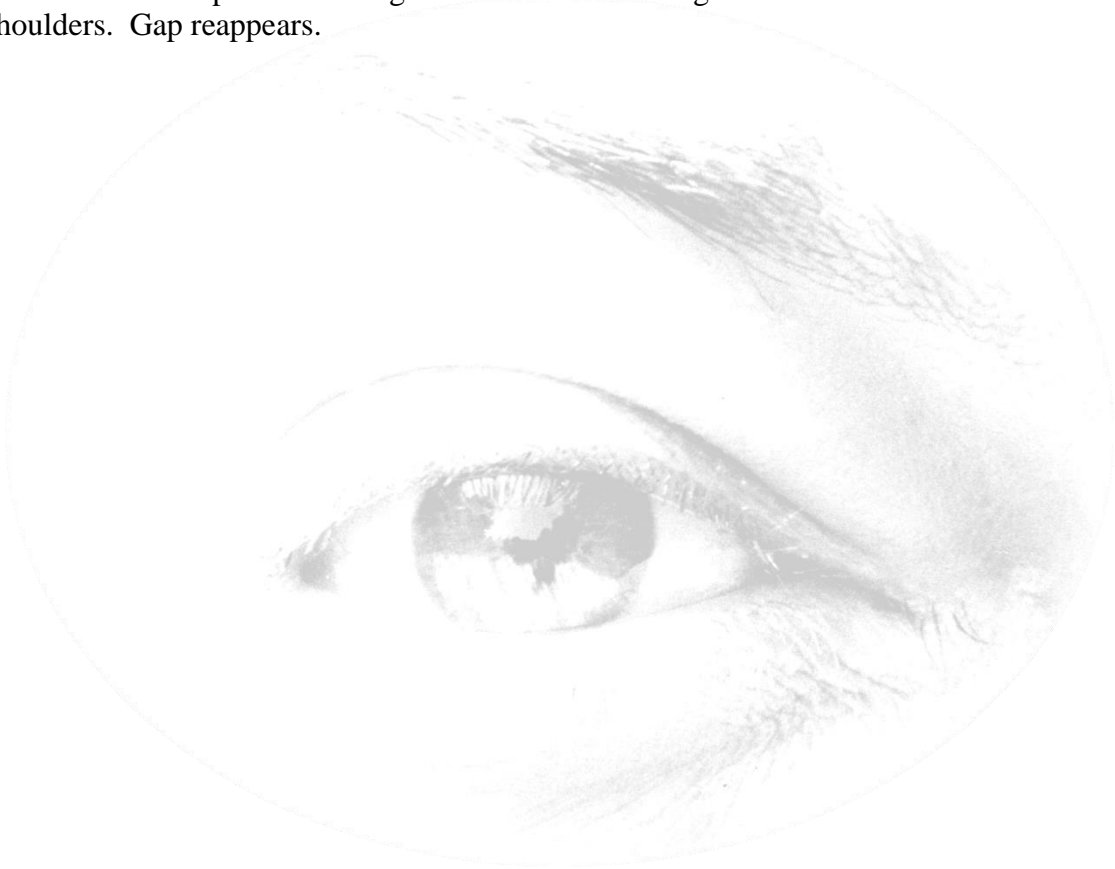
Flowers: blossoms. Fireworks. Patterns or designs.
And in the case of courtesans or prostitutes,
costly.



Jerrice J. Baptiste 2 poems

Day Before Her Birthday

Barefoot in grass. Overlooking the Canarsie Pier, my sister brushes her cheeks with a magnolia petal, resting it on her nose, inhaling scent of rebirth. She smiles. The gap between her two front teeth appears. As pink light streams from blooming trees, we say goodbye to the last day of her birth year. She unzips her white corduroy Jacket. Sun shifts to her solar plexus. She signals with her index finger for me to rub her shoulders. Gap reappears.



La veille de son anniversaire

Pieds nus dans l'herbe mouillée de rosée. Surplombant la jetée de Canarsie, ma sœur se brosse les joues avec un pétale de magnolia, le posant sur son nez, inhalant le parfum de la renaissance. Elle sourit. L'écart entre ses deux dents de devant apparaît. Alors que la lumière rose jaillit des arbres en fleurs, elle dit au revoir au dernier jour de son année de naissance. Dézippe sa veste en velours côtelé blanc. Le soleil se déplace vers son plexus solaire. Son index me fait signe de lui frotter les épaules. L'écart réapparaît.



Stephen Rufus 3 poems

MARKING TIME

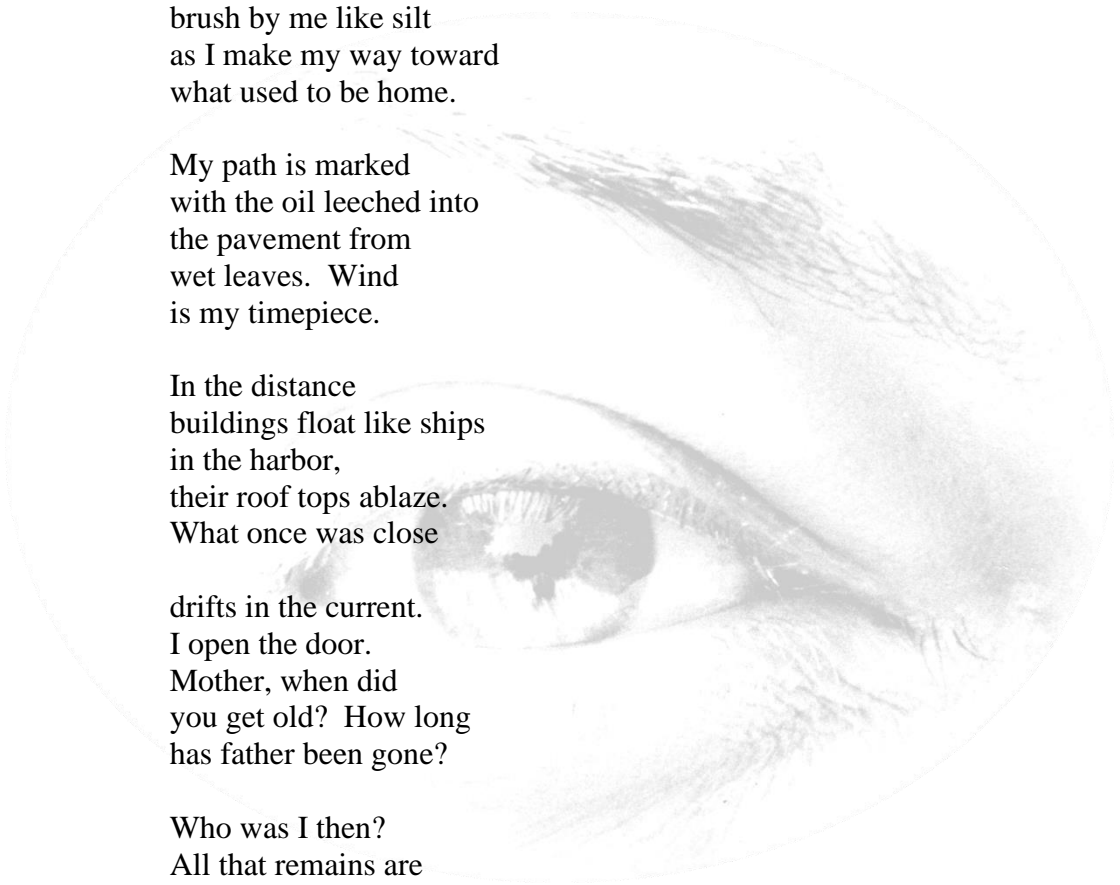
I walk unseen down
the old streets. People
brush by me like silt
as I make my way toward
what used to be home.

My path is marked
with the oil leached into
the pavement from
wet leaves. Wind
is my timepiece.

In the distance
buildings float like ships
in the harbor,
their roof tops ablaze.
What once was close

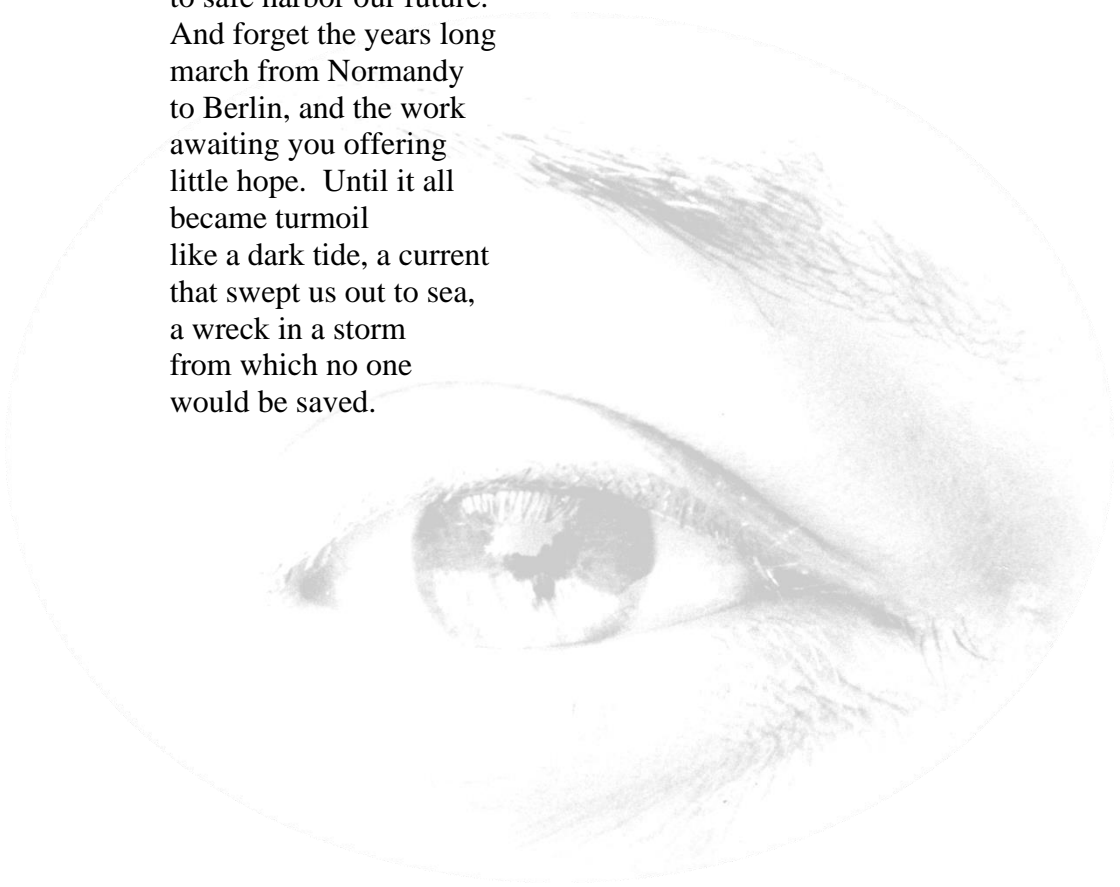
drifts in the current.
I open the door.
Mother, when did
you get old? How long
has father been gone?

Who was I then?
All that remains are
the echoes, and the
rain blowing through
the open window.



THE BET

At the war's closing
bags packed with promise
for the final crossing
to an unknown horizon
on the other shore.
Disembarked he had
already picked up a taste
for the quick money
from the shuffled deck
a roll of the dice
and a score big enough
to safe harbor our future.
And forget the years long
march from Normandy
to Berlin, and the work
awaiting you offering
little hope. Until it all
became turmoil
like a dark tide, a current
that swept us out to sea,
a wreck in a storm
from which no one
would be saved.



MORTALITY

At this stage one's skin reads
like a map, a topography of a life

lived memory sloughed off
a future forecast. It is ironic

that we age before our eyes
in reverse in a mirror our bodies

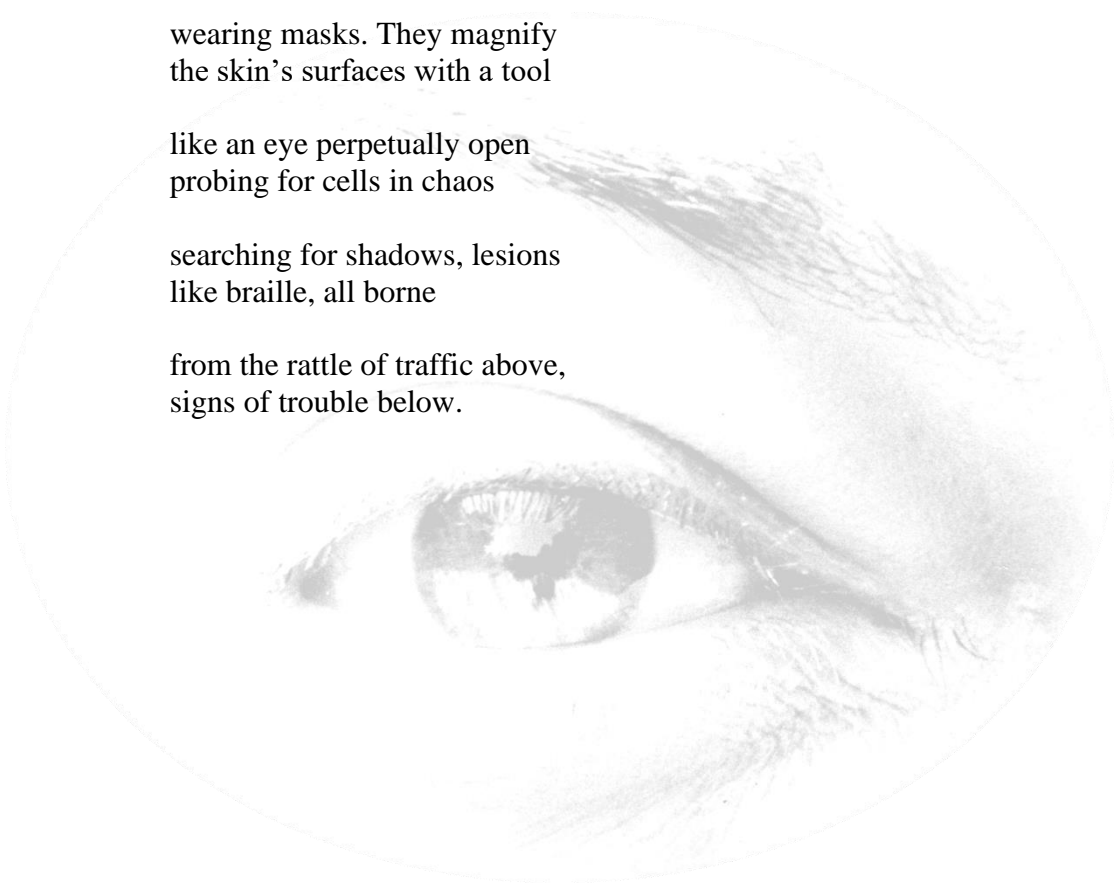
a city scape, a street rife
for constant repair by strangers

wearing masks. They magnify
the skin's surfaces with a tool

like an eye perpetually open
probing for cells in chaos

searching for shadows, lesions
like braille, all borne

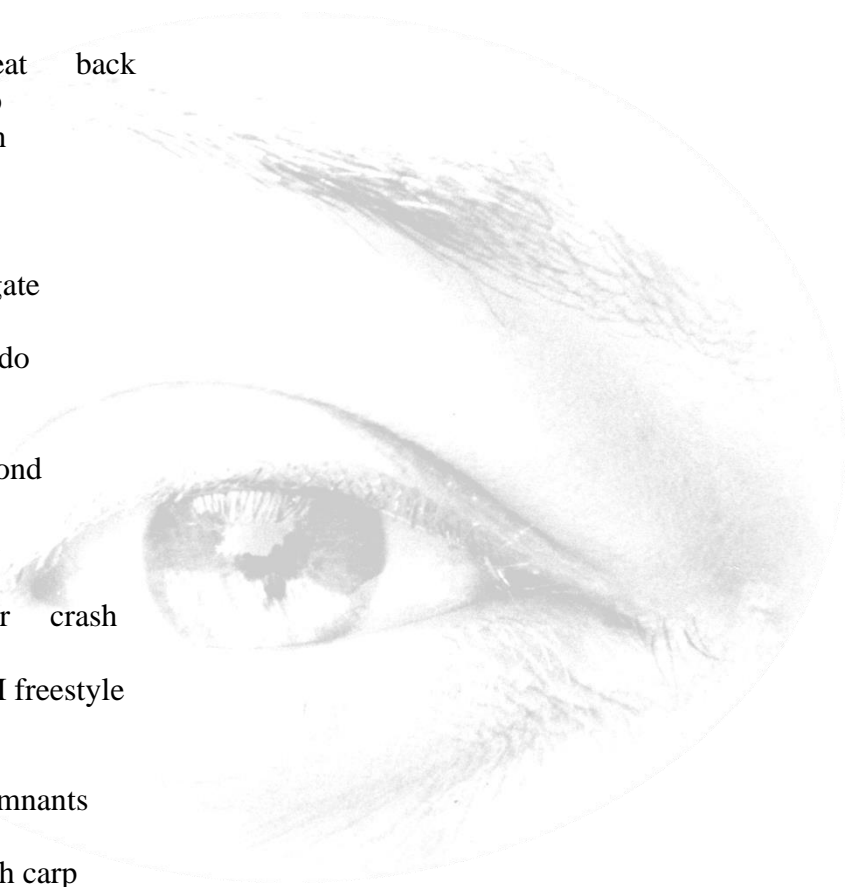
from the rattle of traffic above,
signs of trouble below.



Trish Hopkinson 4 poems

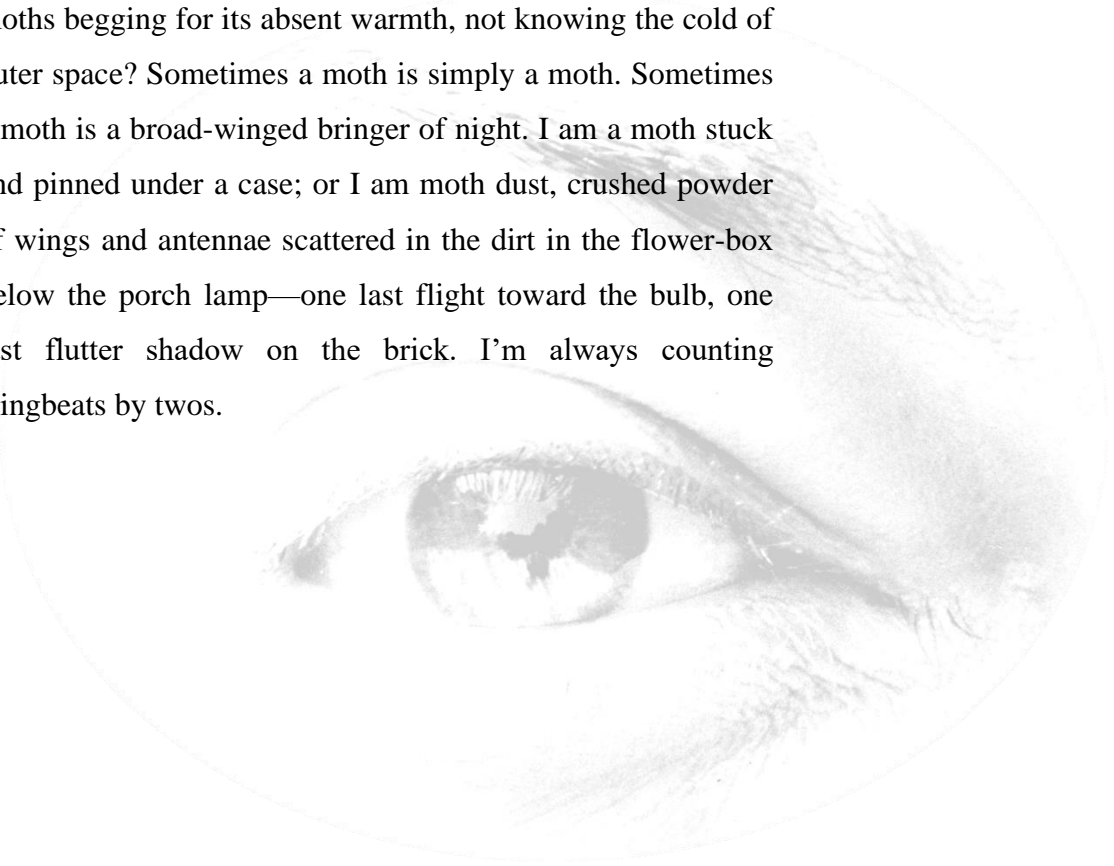
LAND LOCK

When the water breaks
I move
through the mid-west
thirteen times I move
swim man-made
lakes into irrigation
gates & farmlands
breaststroke green
alfalfa & swaying wheat back
stroke into mothership
storms I move again
propel westward
in dead man's
float I periscope
from the sky navigate
the continental divide
swoop into the Colorado
river butterfly
past rapids & canyons
trudgeon swift beyond
Moab's border
seep into underground
hot springs I trickle
through sulfur & crater crash
from the bridal veil
into the Provo river I freestyle
backwards to no avail
splash mercilessly
into shallows the remnants
Bonneville embraced
& rest in sediment with carp
where men in waders drop
their seining nets catch
& drag me stagnant to shore



SELFIES AS A BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD

What if my throat patch changes color with the seasons—
from ruby to orange to brown? What if Moses built an ark so
I can float but not without first watering the lawn? You know
that I know the screech owl of prayer just swooped o'er our
heads bobbing in the hot tub, I flinched but you didn't notice.
What if I'm a jumping spider propelled by blood—the flow
pushing me above ground—the whisper of weightlessness?
What if the streetlight of the moon is one of millions, the
moths begging for its absent warmth, not knowing the cold of
outer space? Sometimes a moth is simply a moth. Sometimes
a moth is a broad-winged bringer of night. I am a moth stuck
and pinned under a case; or I am moth dust, crushed powder
of wings and antennae scattered in the dirt in the flower-box
below the porch lamp—one last flight toward the bulb, one
last flutter shadow on the brick. I'm always counting
wingbeats by twos.



A GODLESS CELEBRATES VERNAL EQUINOX

there is no other divine
yes there is no spirit besides

there are no confessions
by these hips

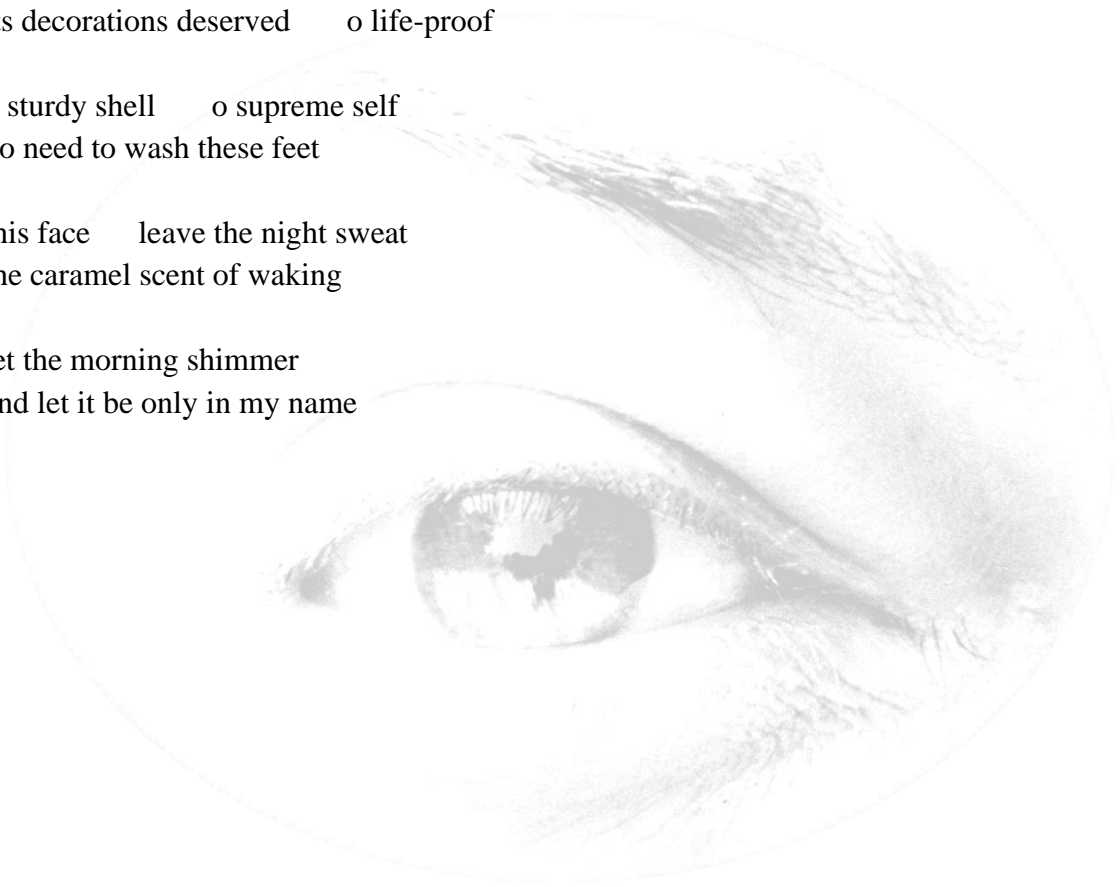
no repentance for these breasts
no holding in this midriff

or potions for its purple marks
its decorations deserved o life-proof

o sturdy shell o supreme self
no need to wash these feet

this face leave the night sweat
the caramel scent of waking

let the morning shimmer
and let it be only in my name



EXISTENCE IS FUTILE

In the same way a car is demolished
when someone sneezes or reads a text
—that swift uncontrollable burst
as the pickup truck a few car lengths ahead

pummels the brakes to avoid
collision with a doe darting
across the dark mountain byway,
a deer crossing sign reflects headlights

passing perpendicular, the lull
in traffic at the nearby intersection
goes unnoticed. In that same way,
an elderly woman opens her front door

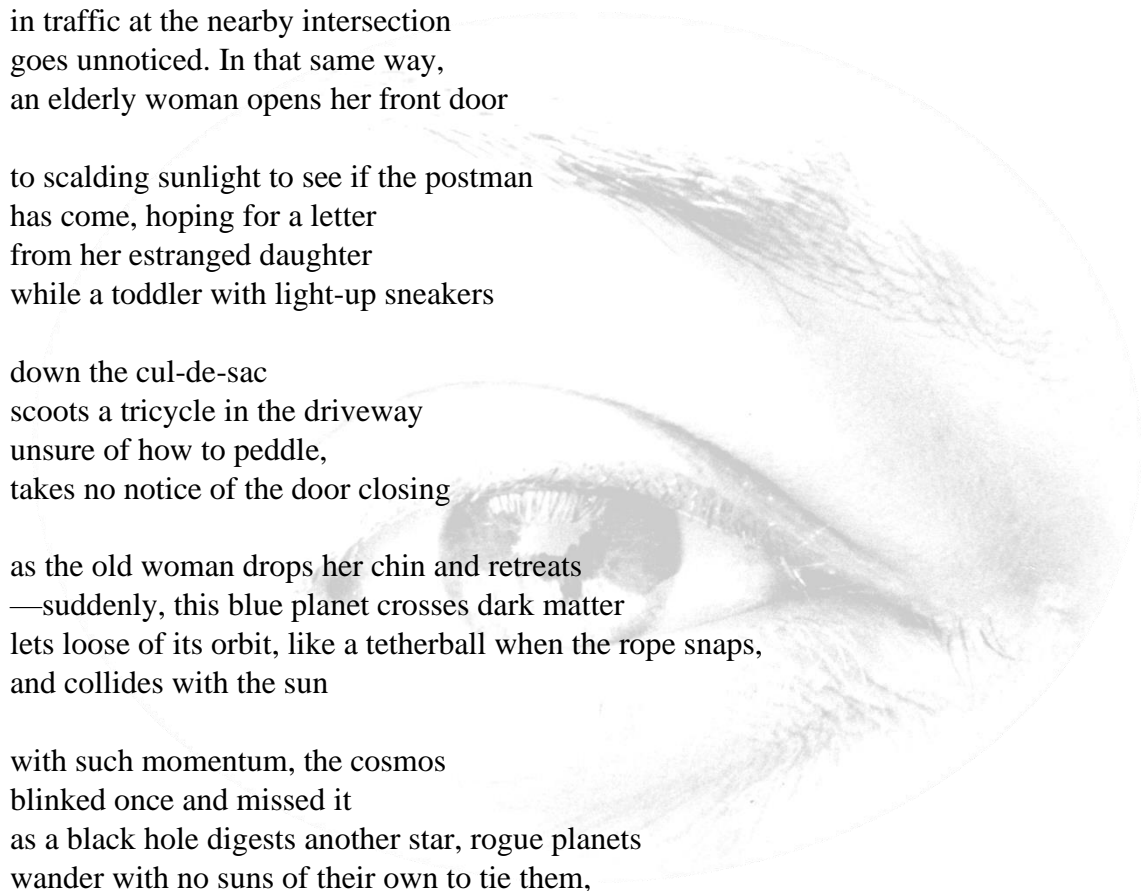
to scalding sunlight to see if the postman
has come, hoping for a letter
from her estranged daughter
while a toddler with light-up sneakers

down the cul-de-sac
scoots a tricycle in the driveway
unsure of how to peddle,
takes no notice of the door closing

as the old woman drops her chin and retreats
—suddenly, this blue planet crosses dark matter
lets loose of its orbit, like a tetherball when the rope snaps,
and collides with the sun

with such momentum, the cosmos
blinked once and missed it
as a black hole digests another star, rogue planets
wander with no suns of their own to tie them,

galaxies bud as they spin,
birthing stars from their limbs
and Jupiter's moons gather in rare vigil
for Pluto's broken heart.



Sinead McGuigan 1 poem

Veils

You want me to stay hidden from the world
A world that appears in glints of grey

I carry these flowers in glorious seeds
Free floating hands filled with miracle dreams

Not bound or rooted in earthly endurance
Open palms serving serenity and peace

You want me to stay hidden behind
these four walls

Trembling, clawing the grey of the night
I dig my fingers searching for stems

Not bound to terror
Not hidden under a cloak of shattered dreams

I pray that my religion embraces and blooms
Not spitting on or mourning me

I pray that my religion illuminates
Not burying my heart with unwritten laws

I scatter petals of truth for all woman
Flourishing in our time of need

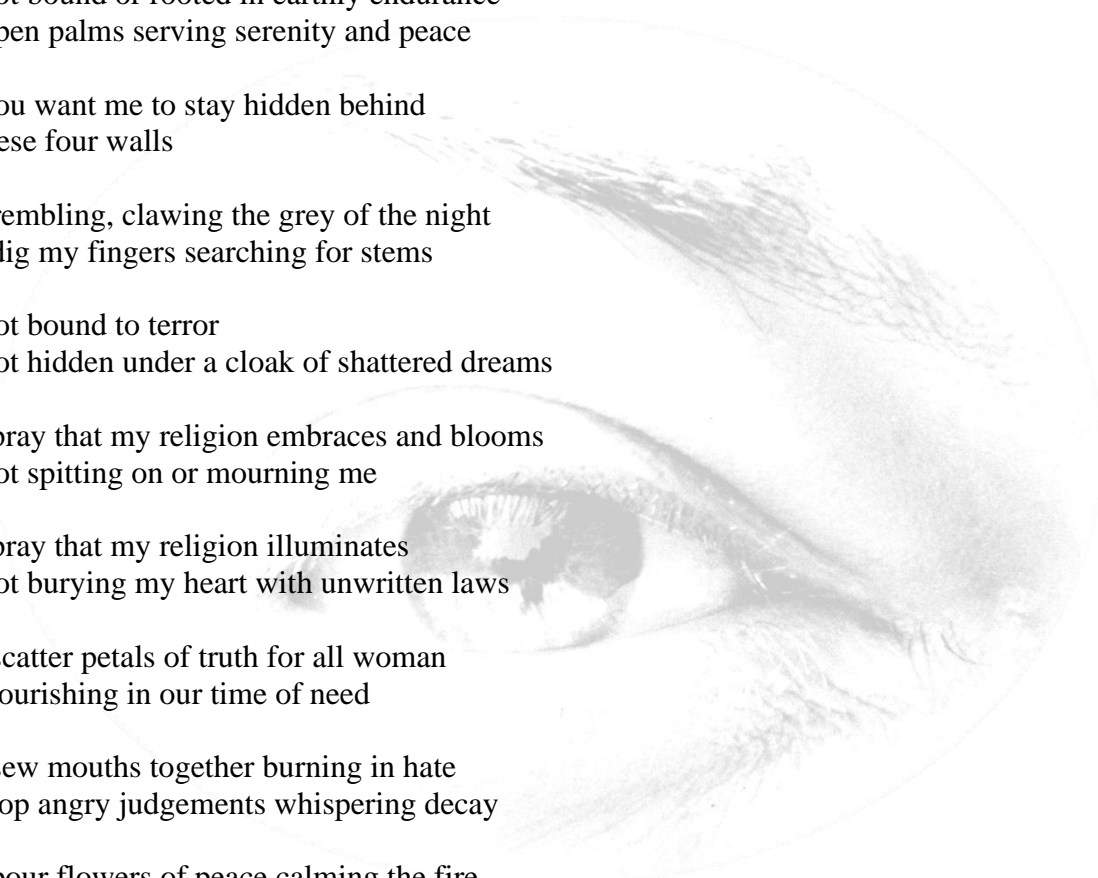
I sew mouths together burning in hate
Stop angry judgements whispering decay

I pour flowers of peace calming the fire
Burning on war torn tongues

I hold garnets outstretched to guide our way
I weave strings of smiles

I am a woman born to be free
Sewing wounds of strife for the unseen

I am a woman who speaks out
I am a woman behind a veil of lies



K. Dulai 2 poems

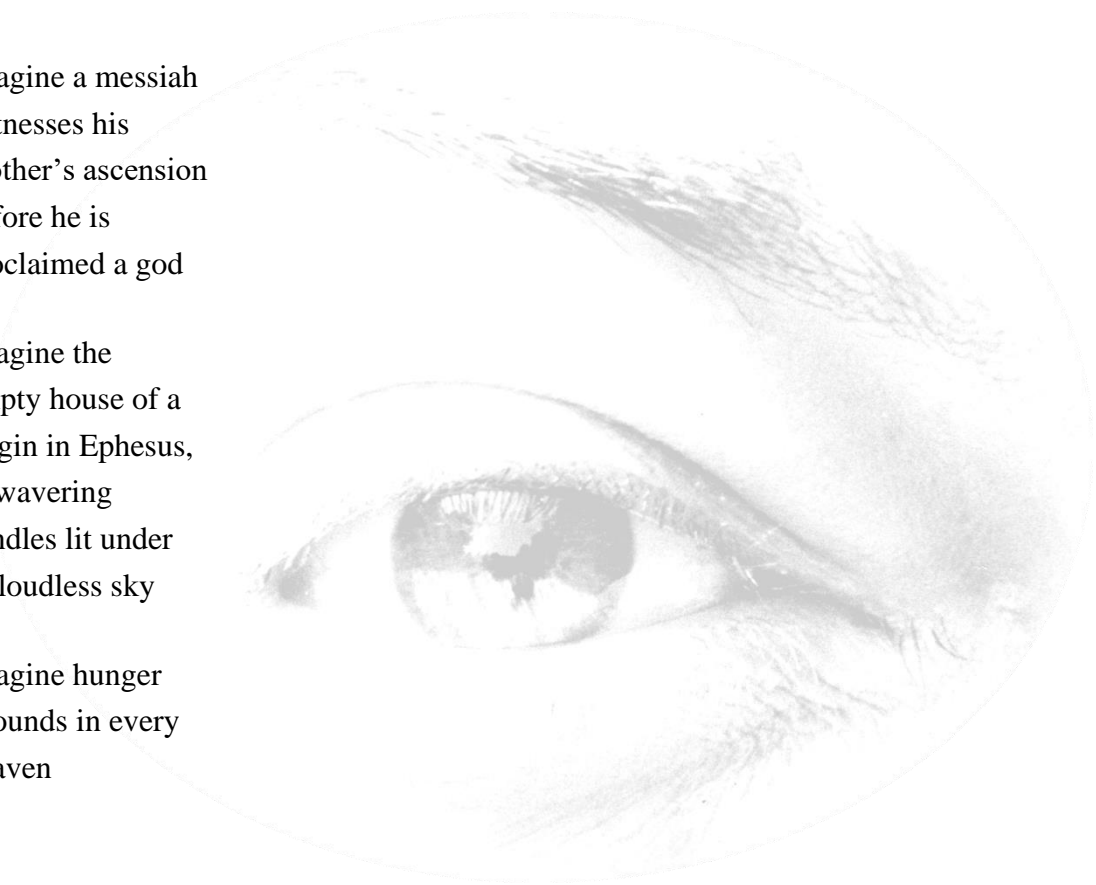
House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus

I am the carrion
with the broken
song— milk still
weeping from my
breasts

Imagine a messiah
witnesses his
mother's ascension
before he is
proclaimed a god

Imagine the
empty house of a
virgin in Ephesus,
unwavering
candles lit under
a cloudless sky

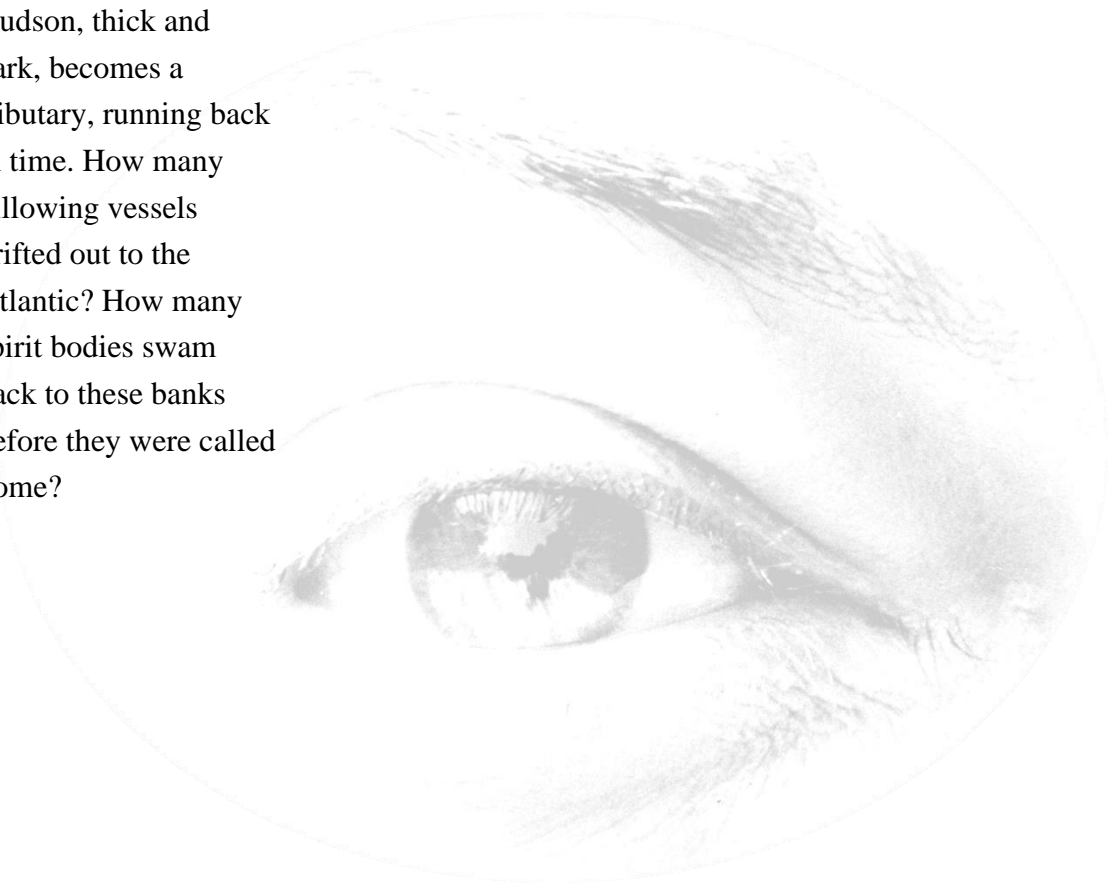
Imagine hunger
abounds in every
heaven



On Returning to Riverside Park, New York

Before I die, I will return to the
riverside and the terraced land
above the promenade Memories of
walks with father to guide me along
the Micah schist wall. Steps
softened by an outdoor den of
Dutch elm, pin oak, and cherry tree
leaves.

Somewhere the
Hudson, thick and
dark, becomes a
tributary, running back
in time. How many
billowing vessels
drifted out to the
Atlantic? How many
spirit bodies swam
back to these banks
before they were called
home?



Jimmy Pappas 1 poem

Grave Visit

I leave
flowers

on my
mother's

newly mown
grave

but I
keep

one for
myself.



Scott Dalgarno 2 poems

“... fool me twice ...”

*My child tugs her kite
like a trout*

*playing the breeze
connecting her to
a fickle sky*

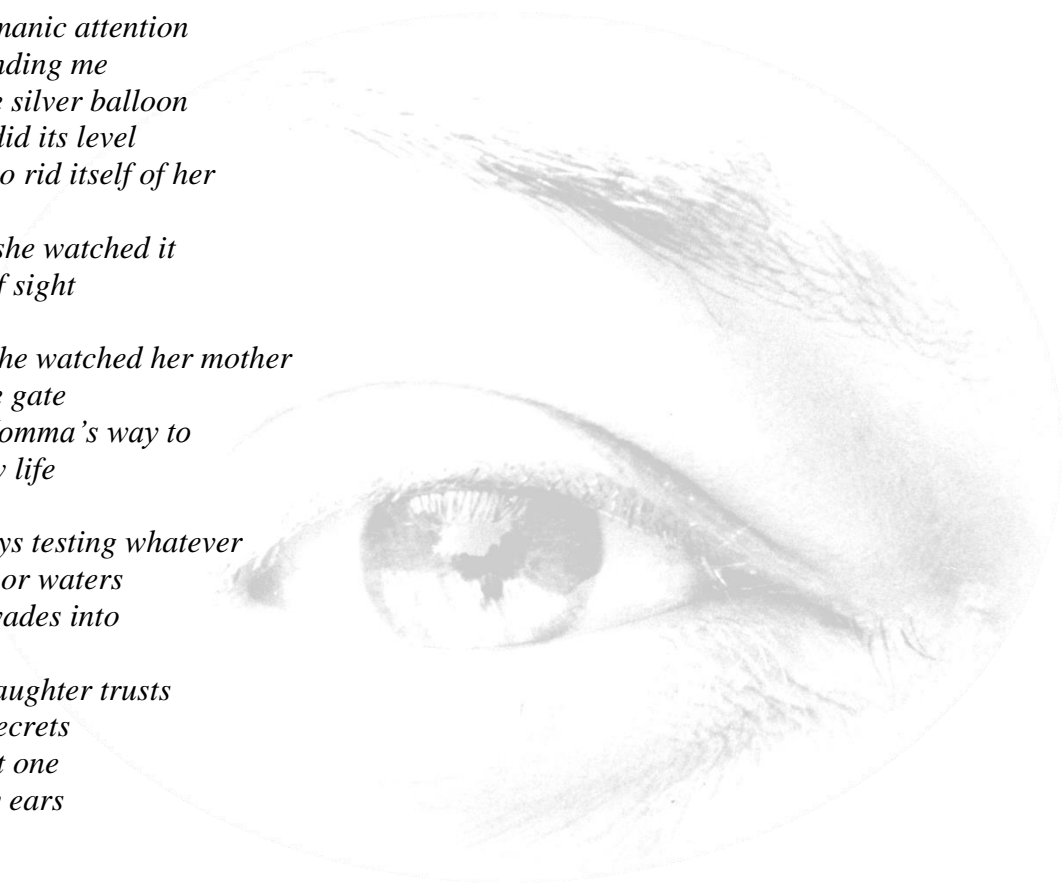
*Her manic attention
reminding me
of the silver balloon
that did its level
best to rid itself of her*

*how she watched it
out of sight*

*like she watched her mother
at the gate
on Momma's way to
a new life*

*Always testing whatever
skies or waters
she wades into*

*my daughter trusts
her secrets
to but one
of my ears*



Blues

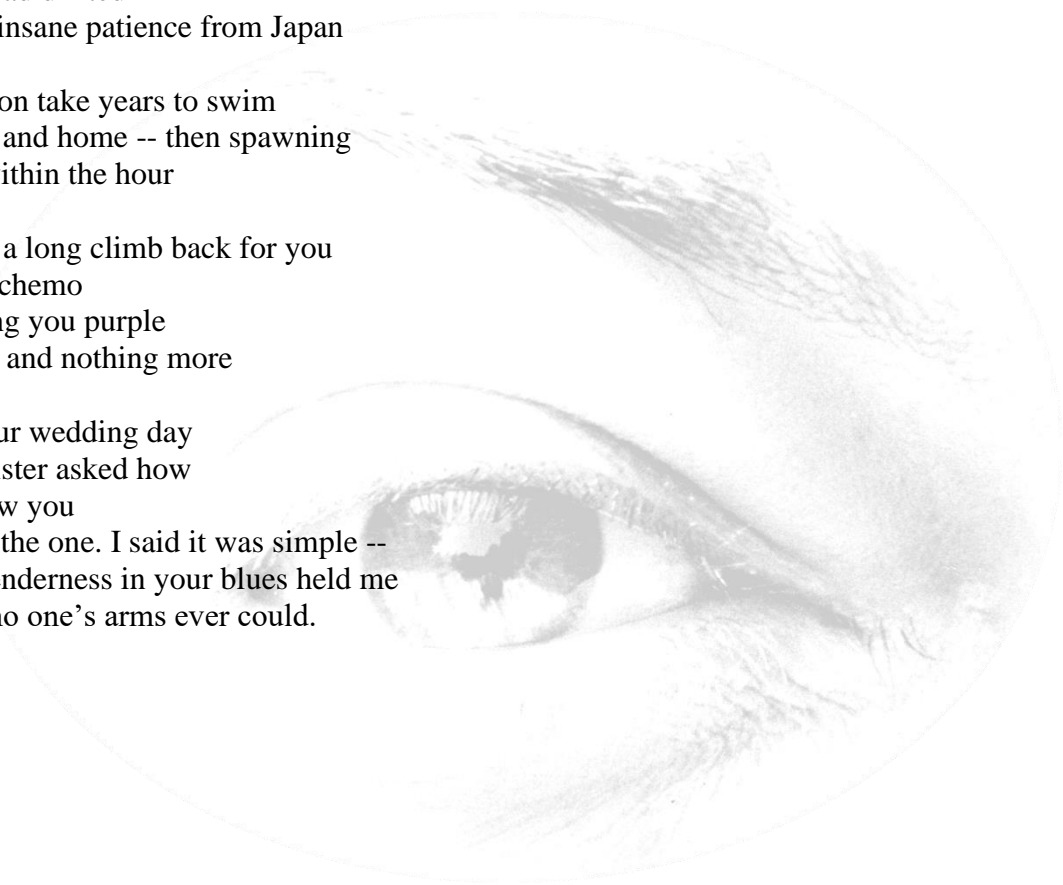
Weekending at the beach
under a jade moon
I woke, wanting you,
your pillow cratered.
You'd risen
in the blue black
meeting the morning barefoot

Coming back to the motel
seaweed braiding your toes
you carried a turquoise float
that had drifted
with insane patience from Japan

Salmon take years to swim
there and home -- then spawning
die within the hour

Such a long climb back for you
after chemo
buying you purple
veins and nothing more

On our wedding day
my sister asked how
I knew you
were the one. I said it was simple --
the tenderness in your blues held me
like no one's arms ever could.



Maril Crabtree 1 poem

Pilgrimage

*I remember feeling like that
walking up the mountain along the dirt path
to my broken house on the island.*

-Linda Gregg

A full heart, a broken house. What do I desire?
A peaceful morning, waking to the sound

of the surf and gulls calling, so different from
waking to the noise of traffic and horns blaring.

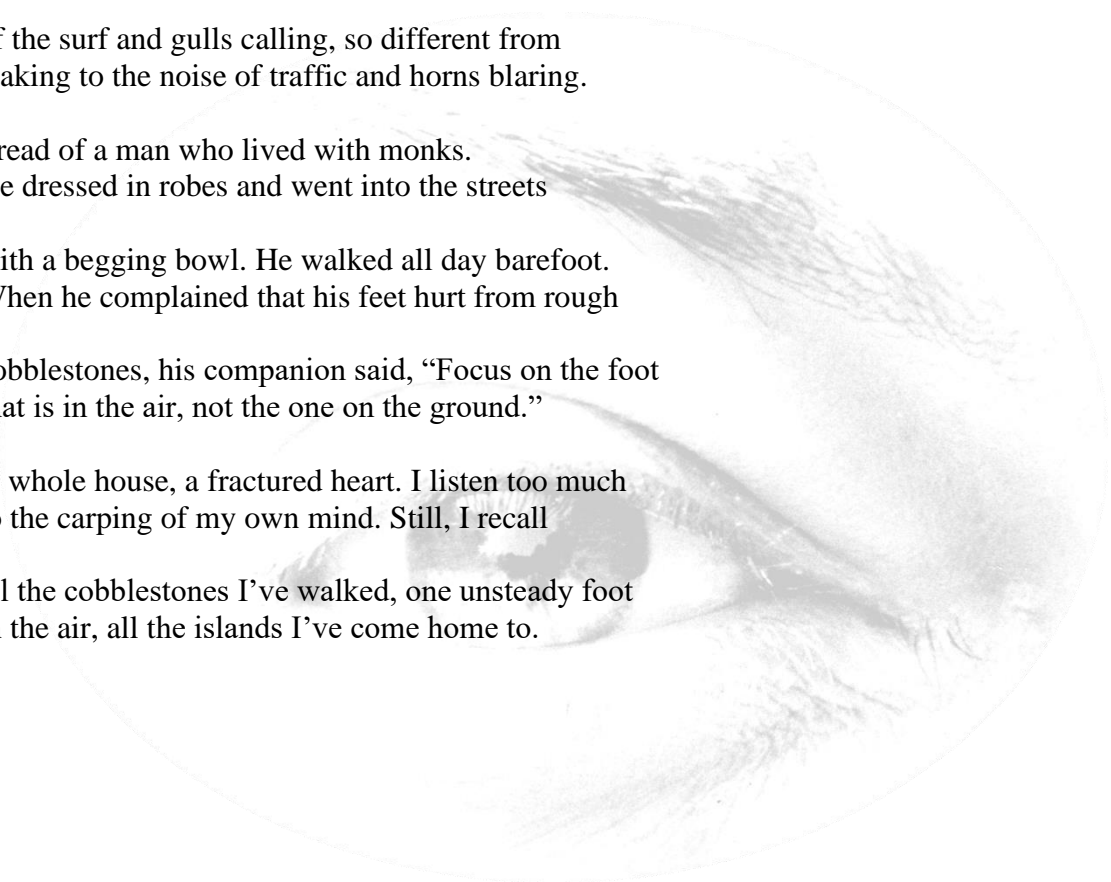
I read of a man who lived with monks.
He dressed in robes and went into the streets

with a begging bowl. He walked all day barefoot.
When he complained that his feet hurt from rough

cobblestones, his companion said, "Focus on the foot
that is in the air, not the one on the ground."

A whole house, a fractured heart. I listen too much
to the carping of my own mind. Still, I recall

all the cobblestones I've walked, one unsteady foot
in the air, all the islands I've come home to.



Michael Penny 1 poem

The Sun Considers a Change of Seasons

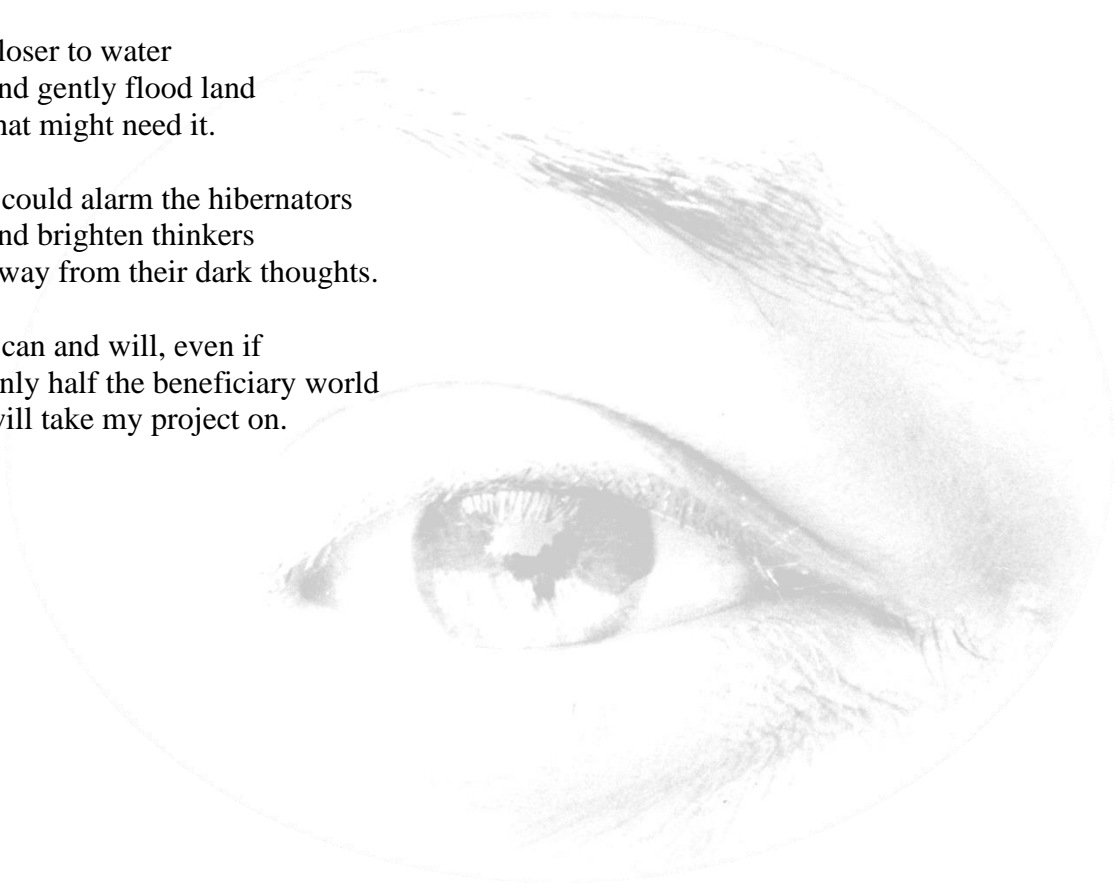
The sun said:
Shall try a Spring now
and glide closer to the earth

skimming the tree-tops
into leaf and flower?
I could nudge a few glaciers

closer to water
and gently flood land
that might need it.

I could alarm the hibernators
and brighten thinkers
away from their dark thoughts.

I can and will, even if
only half the beneficiary world
will take my project on.



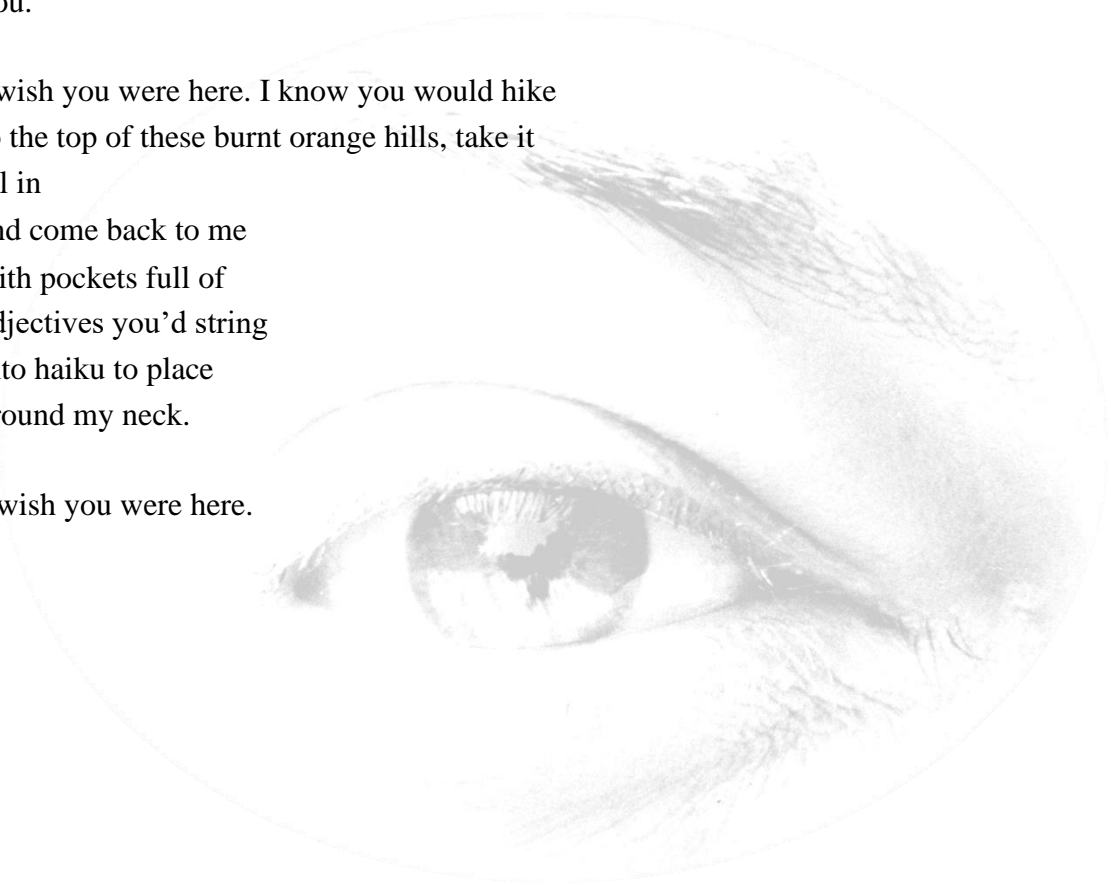
Angie Ebba 1 poem

Postcards from Elsewhere

I wish you were here. I know you would tell me
the names of rocks, tell me to close my eyes and
feel them, describing them to me so I would
know them intimately the way I want to know
you.

I wish you were here. I know you would hike
to the top of these burnt orange hills, take it
all in
and come back to me
with pockets full of
adjectives you'd string
into haiku to place
around my neck.

I wish you were here.



Faith Paulsen 1 poem

NASA Image Shows “Ghostly Cosmic Hand,” October 31, 2023*

Spooked by the timing—
the newspapers call it “a ghostly hand,”
and, yes, we see it,
rising from the moist soil of space, as if from
its grave, buried in the headlines.
The shooting, the hostages, the wars. Plural. The salmon harvest, gone.

Through a spyglass in the cosmos,
crystal cut by light and ingenuity, the photo blooms.
In a pulsar wind nebula,
the complicated bones of the wrist, the dexterous phalanges
blue violet among stars, a hand,
like the hand Michelangelo painted from his scaffold.
His hand-painted anthropomorphic, male, white deity,
pulled magnetically, toward companionship.

The first image through a milky stare.
Thumb to pinky, Buddhi mudra,
count to ten. Our ancestors’ five-fingered prints
on cave wall and clay pot,
pat, pat, pat.
We make everything about ourselves.

At Stonehenge, at Chaco Canyon, at Jantar Mantar,
perched in our lucky chairs, clutching
our Hamsa hands, Evil eyes, our Moons and Stars,
we repeat with pinched and practiced lips, *Please.*

*On the one hand, on the other hand,
hands-on, hands-off. Give me
a hand, will you?*

Out of the stardust that sculpted us,
we see what we hope to see. A collapsed star
waves back, luminescence
like an instrument on its palm.

*“The hand is actually the remnants of a collapsed giant star, which ran out of nuclear fuel around 1,500 years ago, NASA [said in a news release](#), and is about 16,000 light-years from Earth.”

—CBS News_

[NASA image shows "ghostly cosmic hand" 16,000 light-years from Earth \(yahoo.com\)](#)

Steven Deutsch 1 poem

Tedium

Yet another sterile Sunday—
steady sunshine
makes a mockery
of the little cemetery—

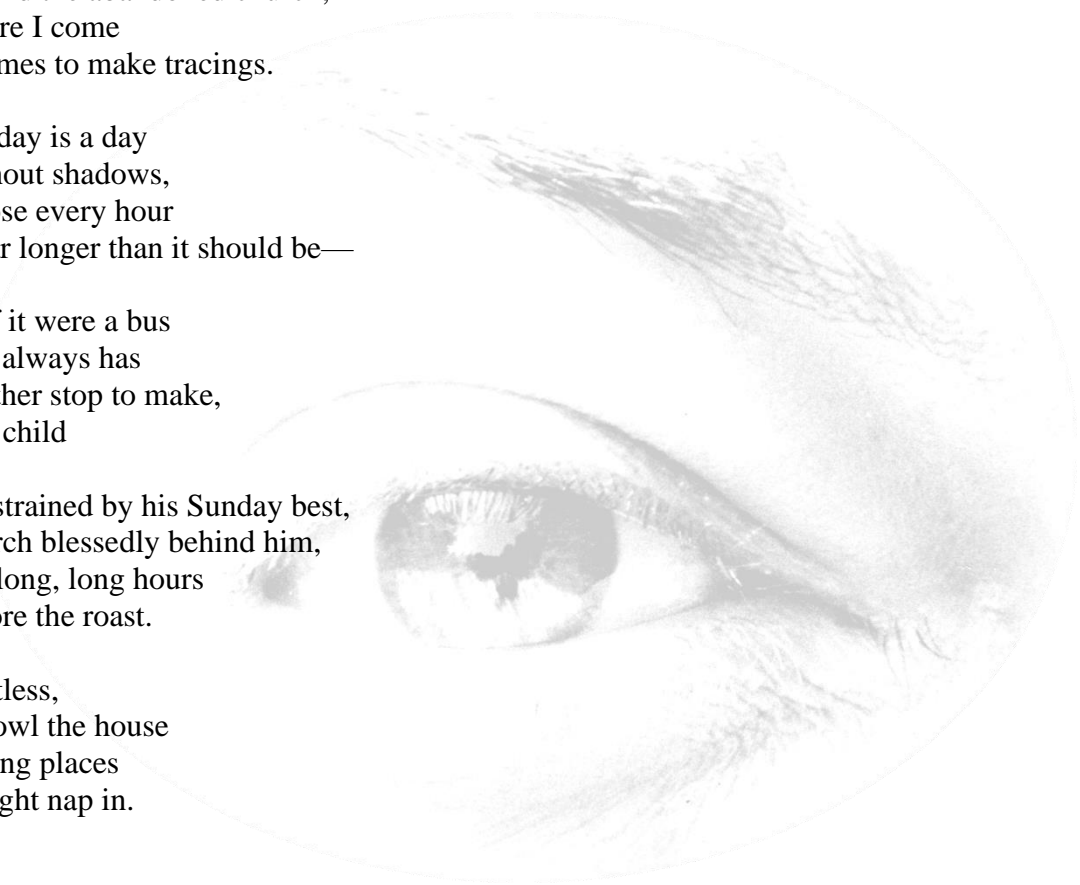
all dirt and darkness,
behind the abandoned church,
where I come
at times to make tracings.

Sunday is a day
without shadows,
whose every hour
is far longer than it should be—

as if it were a bus
that always has
another stop to make,
or a child

constrained by his Sunday best,
church blessedly behind him,
but long, long hours
before the roast.

Restless,
I prowl the house
testing places
I might nap in.



MJ L'Espérance 1 poem

Virgins and Wolves

In the middle of gym class,
we are handpicked by the counsellor.

Sweet little things,
the unfortunate few who worry

about wearing white jeans
and wrap a hoodie around our waist

a few days of the month. Ejected
from earth's gravity.

Learning to count. Passing time
like a satellite. Listen,

she says, as we press together
like wildflowers. Stem bodies trembling.

Corolla head hung heavy from shame.
Eyes cast toward the ground.

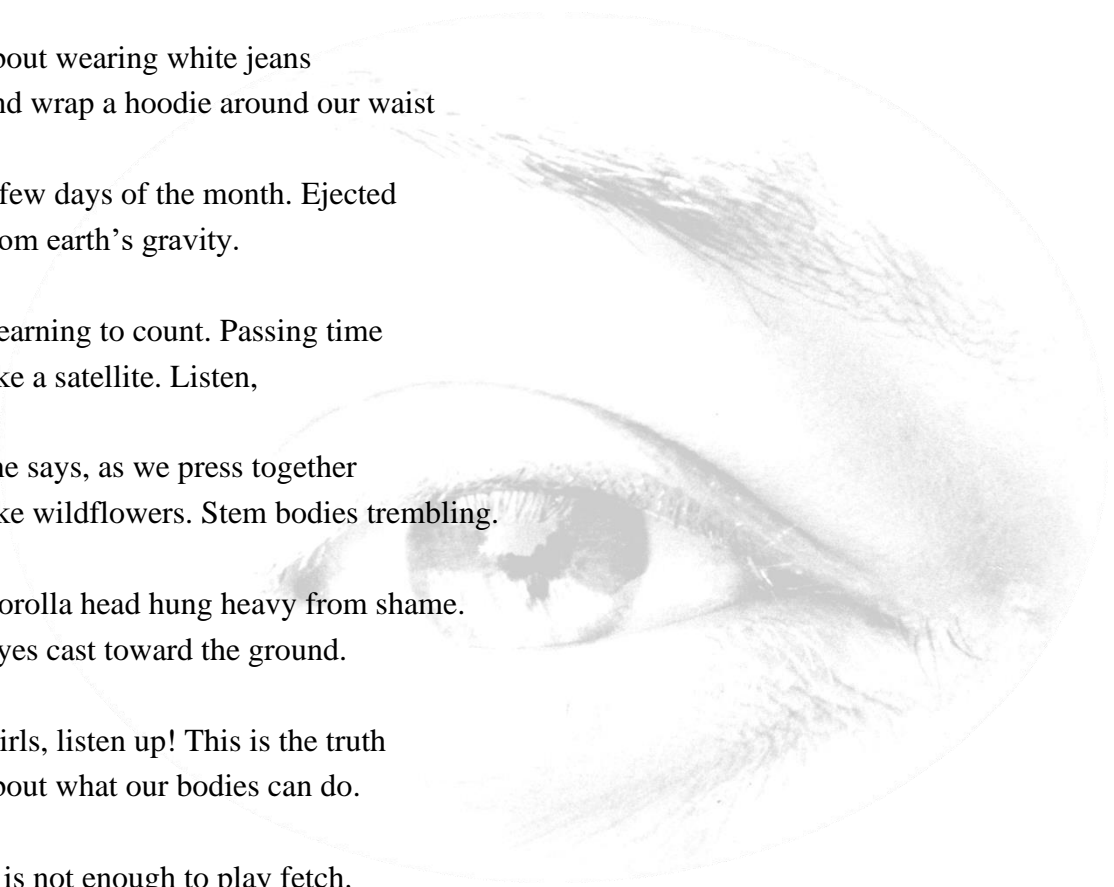
Girls, listen up! This is the truth
about what our bodies can do.

It is not enough to play fetch.
You must turn yourself to the moon.

And howl and take the night for yourself
before it devours you.

Gather closer. Tear your lily dresses up.
Let your spines break

under the weight of this new shape.
Dig your claws into the dirt.



Lash out at the shadows of the boys
who try to take the wild

out of you and skin your pelt as a trophy
while you sleep. Sink your teeth

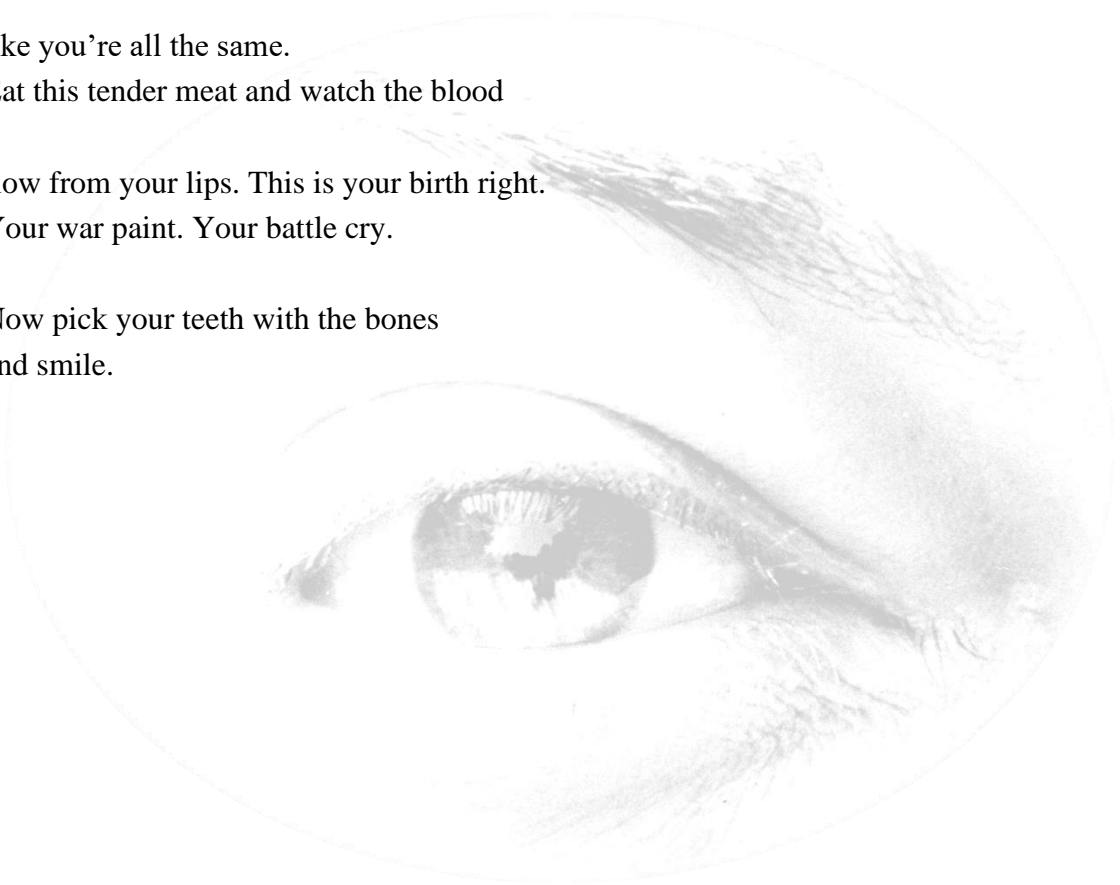
into the offering of the first man
who will ask if you're 18 yet.

Ask you for your number. A smile. A kiss.
Try to pluck you from a crowded bar

like you're all the same.
Eat this tender meat and watch the blood

flow from your lips. This is your birth right.
Your war paint. Your battle cry.

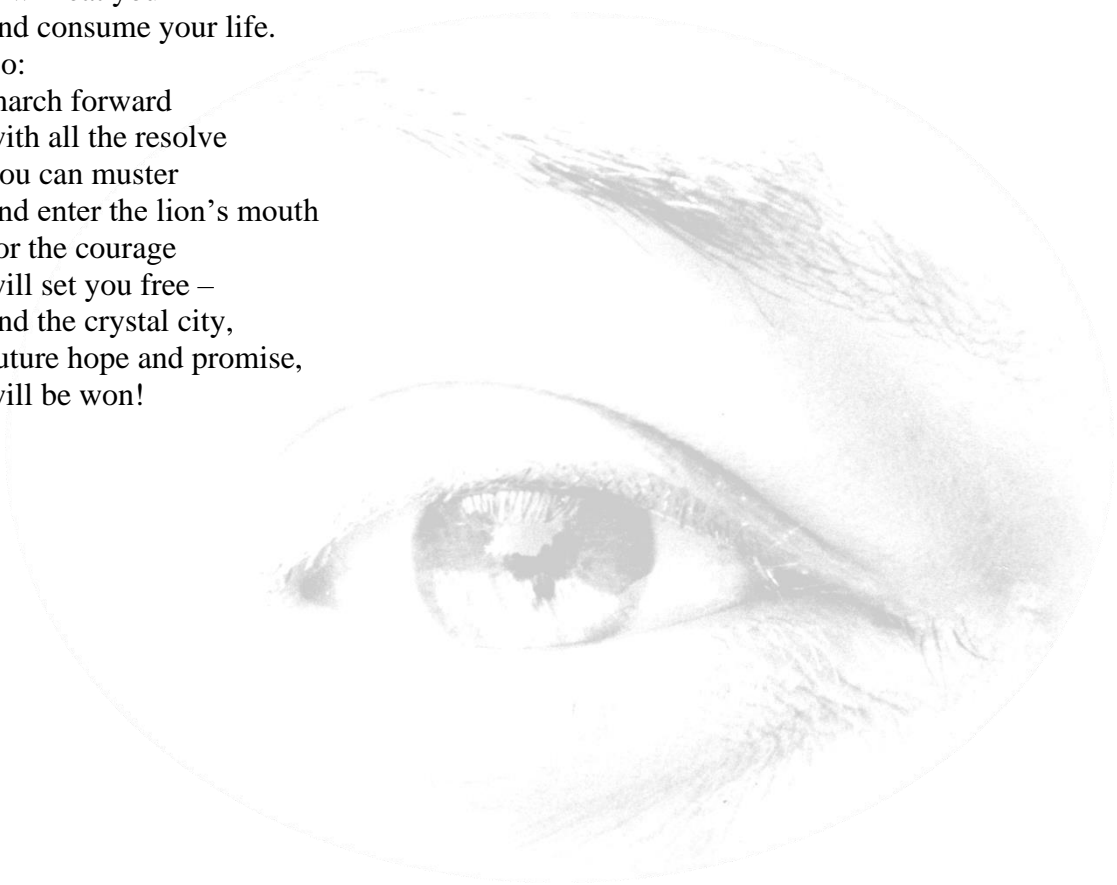
Now pick your teeth with the bones
and smile.



Duane Herrmann 2 poems

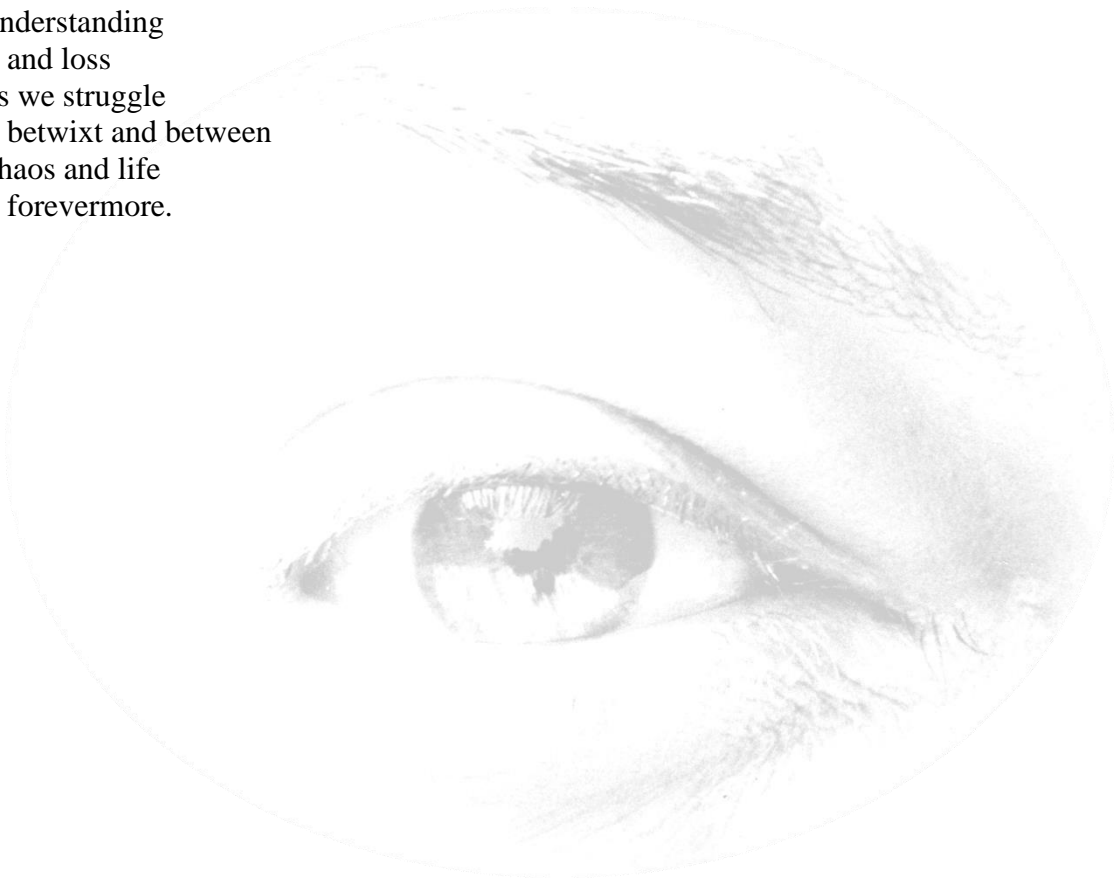
The Conquering Fear

Through the mouth of the lion,
and around a corner,
lies the crystal city.
Only by embracing fear
can it be surpassed,
otherwise
it will eat you
and consume your life.
So:
march forward
with all the resolve
you can muster
and enter the lion's mouth
for the courage
will set you free –
and the crystal city,
future hope and promise,
will be won!



Homage To W. Stevens

The city of quail
flew before the brush
while underneath
the lizard lies.
To seeing eyes
the two command
both sky and land
for...
there is no sea
but you and me.
Once was, but then
a moment
understanding
and loss
as we struggle
betwixt and between
chaos and life
forevermore.



Cynthia Gallaher 2 poems

After Suzanne Valadon's "The Abandoned Doll" 1921

(National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.)

Perhaps it's the last time she'll allow her mother to towel her off after a bath, as she catches a glimpse of her pubescent body emerging in the hand-held mirror. A pink hair ribbon her only garb, if you don't count the ivory bangle at her wrist.

Her doll, tossed aside in the girl's rush to feel a new splendor in the steamy tub. Rising up, now sitting at the edge of the bed, she's entranced by her future as cast her reflection, her toes graze carpet, her right foot forward as if already stepping into it.

The path her mother also trod, both barefoot and shod, though not in this time or place.

Yet the same one her daughter is set to navigate.

_ Suzanne Valadon, *The Abandoned Doll*, 1921



After Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks" 1942

sleepless hours, long and deep,
like languid puffs
from that billboard nickel stogie.

new restaurant fluorescents burn
as sharply as sunrise
on this dark side of the decade.

I'm not here for tea for two,
a little soft shoe, I take coffee, black,
and Red over here

studies her bag of Darjeeling
as if it were the box
to an engagement ring I can't afford.

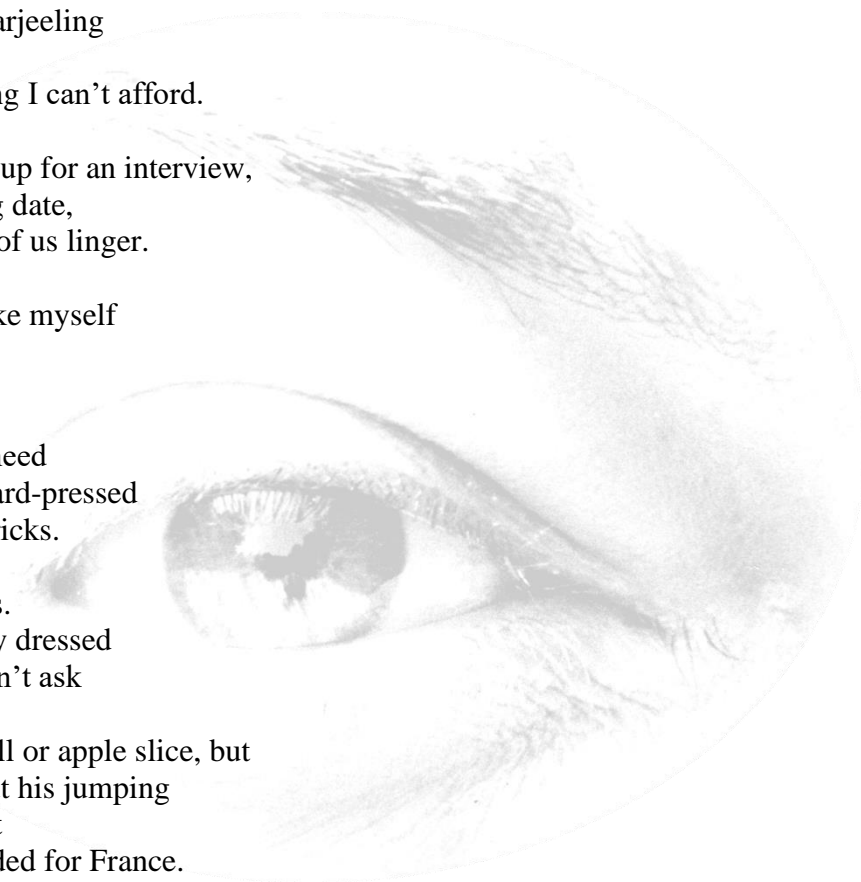
shirt and tie squared up for an interview,
not an early-morning date,
while just a handful of us linger.

I see a chump just like myself
riffing through the
same want ads

for firms that don't need
middle-aged stiff's hard-pressed
to learn fresh sales tricks.

a harbor horn sounds.
the soda jerk, already dressed
in navy whites, doesn't ask

if I need another refill or apple slice, but
says something about his jumping
this wooden rowboat
for a steely ship headed for France.

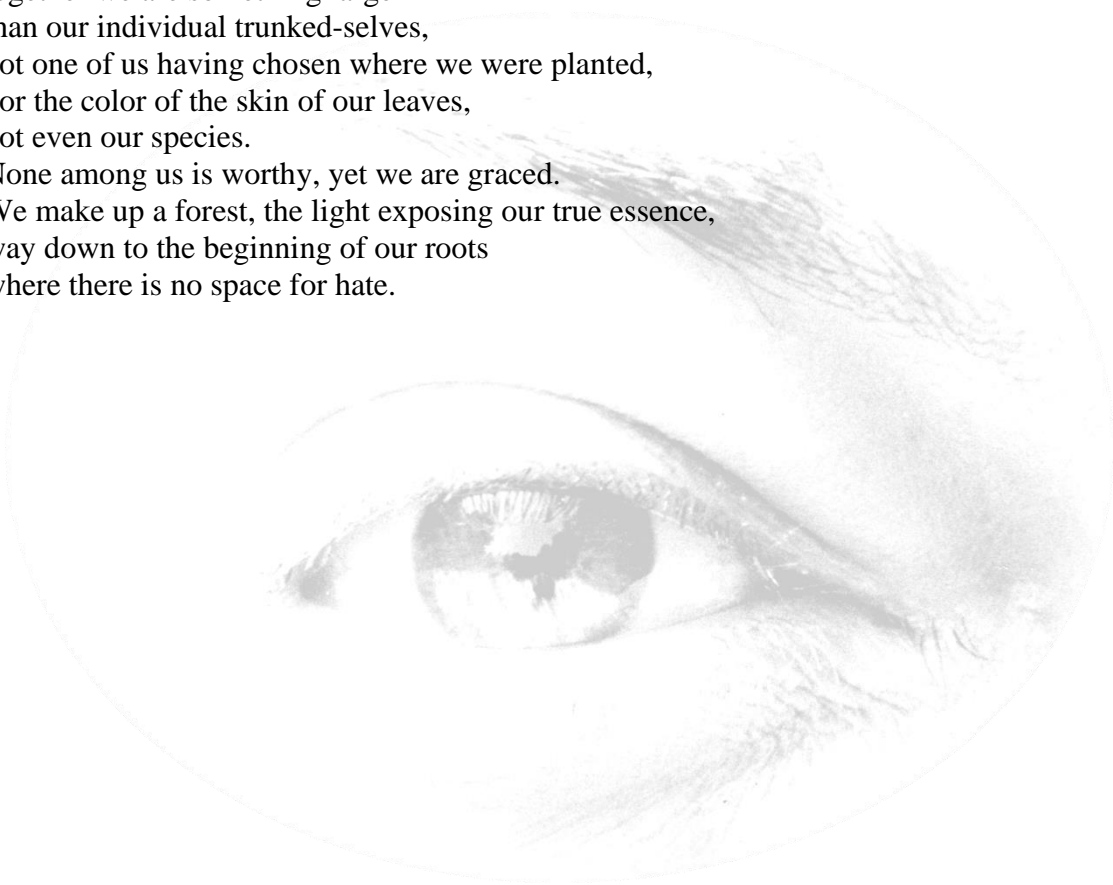


Angela Hoffman 2 poems

Ceasefire

This time of year the trees stand with arms bare
in the shadows of death,
in rows with space in-between like the pause between breaths.
You see what was once hidden beneath the blaze of leaves:
a hornet's nest, a rusty plowshare, the naked truth;

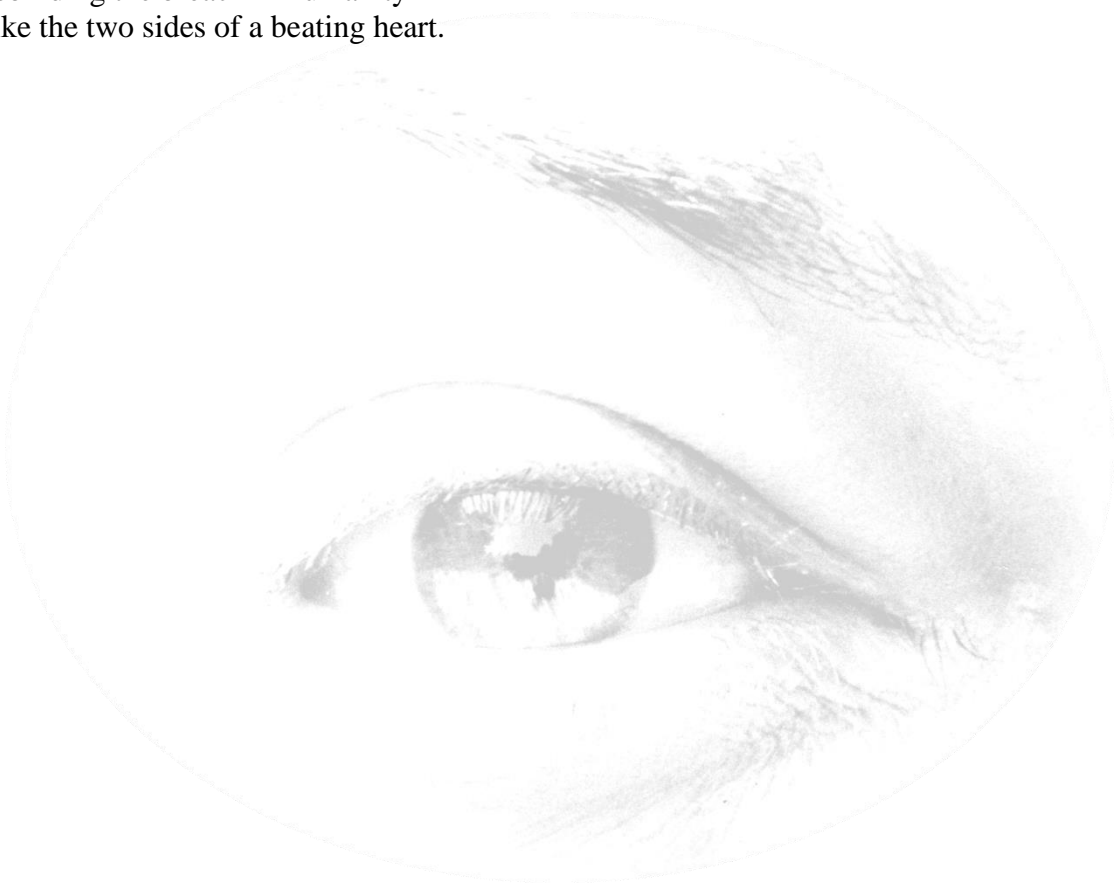
together we are something larger
than our individual trunked-selves,
not one of us having chosen where we were planted,
nor the color of the skin of our leaves,
not even our species.
None among us is worthy, yet we are graced.
We make up a forest, the light exposing our true essence,
way down to the beginning of our roots
where there is no space for hate.



One Heart, One Body

The leaves bleed red, unhinge,
and our one body
with two sides is warring yet again;
left, right, left, right, left, right.

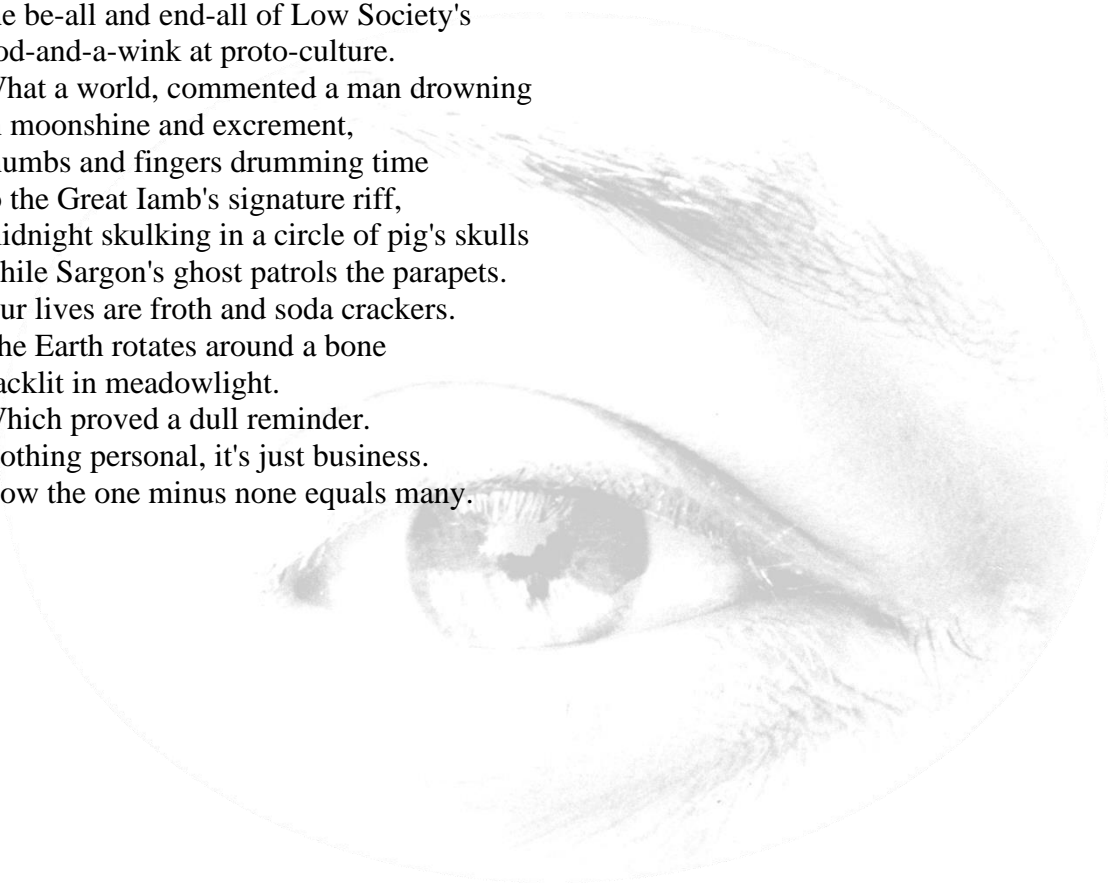
We look for menders in the midst of the terror;
the tender-hearted, the repairers
who will march across
boundaries, barriers, biases,
politics, ethnicity, religion,
gender, nationality, class
rebinding the breach in humanity
like the two sides of a beating heart.



Bruce McRae 1 poem

Stuff And Nonsense

Blood quaffed beside the Yangtze River.
A feast of mealworms
then forty laps around the campus quad,
our newspapers pressed from rags and horsehair,
as radical as that is ridiculous.
Manpower plus gunpowder and the Red Sea
is thine, a host of grimy miracles
the be-all and end-all of Low Society's
nod-and-a-wink at proto-culture.
What a world, commented a man drowning
in moonshine and excrement,
thumbs and fingers drumming time
to the Great Iamb's signature riff,
midnight skulking in a circle of pig's skulls
while Sargon's ghost patrols the parapets.
Our lives are froth and soda crackers.
The Earth rotates around a bone
backlit in meadowlight.
Which proved a dull reminder.
Nothing personal, it's just business.
How the one minus none equals many.



Terez Piepins 1 poem

This Road Returns

Straight to the farmhouse,
follow a path
to the barn, where darkness shields
soft animal eyes. Hands touch
budding horns of a calf.
Touch the stiff carcass of a bull
hanging in the milk house.

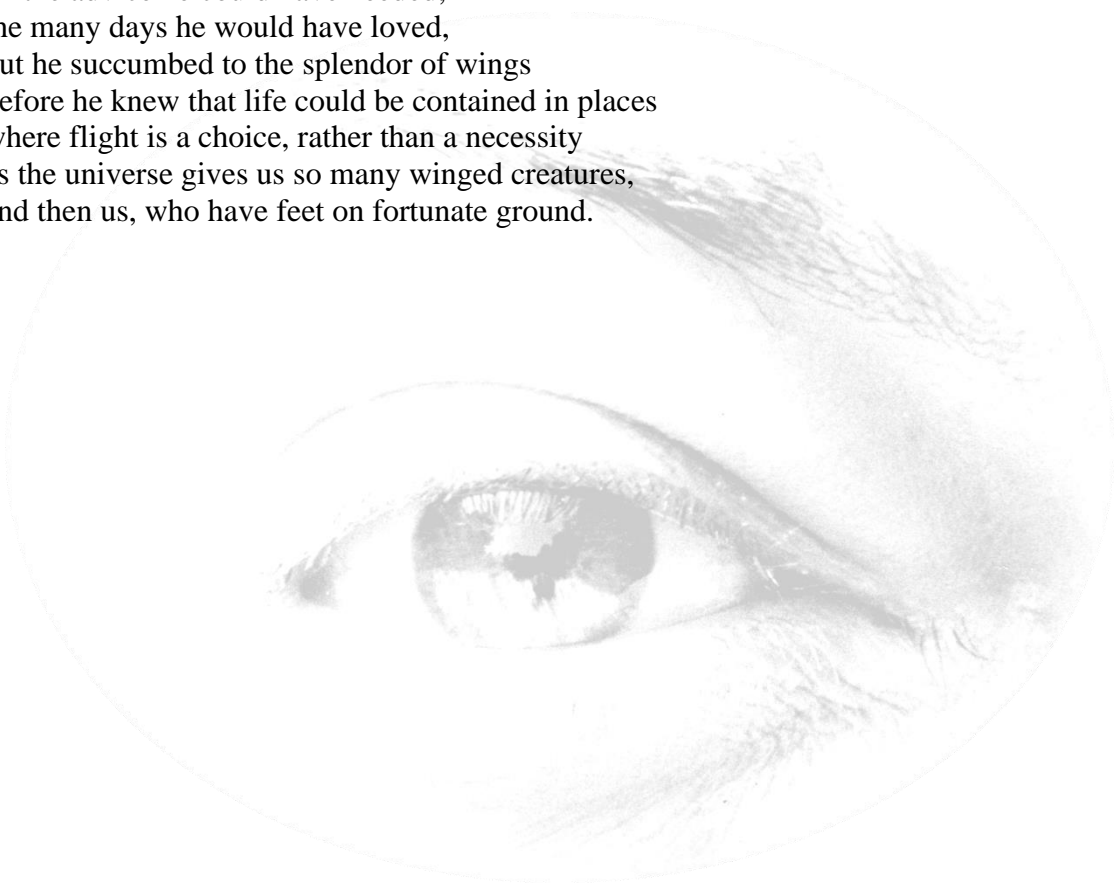
This road returns
past silos and ponds.



Laurie Kuntz 1 poem

Icarus at 30

Had he lived, what would he be like?
What self imposed labyrinths
would he have to escape?
What if waxy wings and wispy feathers held true
or had he listened more closely, not been taken
by the freedom that befell him in a moment of bliss,
all the advice he could have heeded,
the many days he would have loved,
but he succumbed to the splendor of wings
before he knew that life could be contained in places
where flight is a choice, rather than a necessity
as the universe gives us so many winged creatures,
and then us, who have feet on fortunate ground.

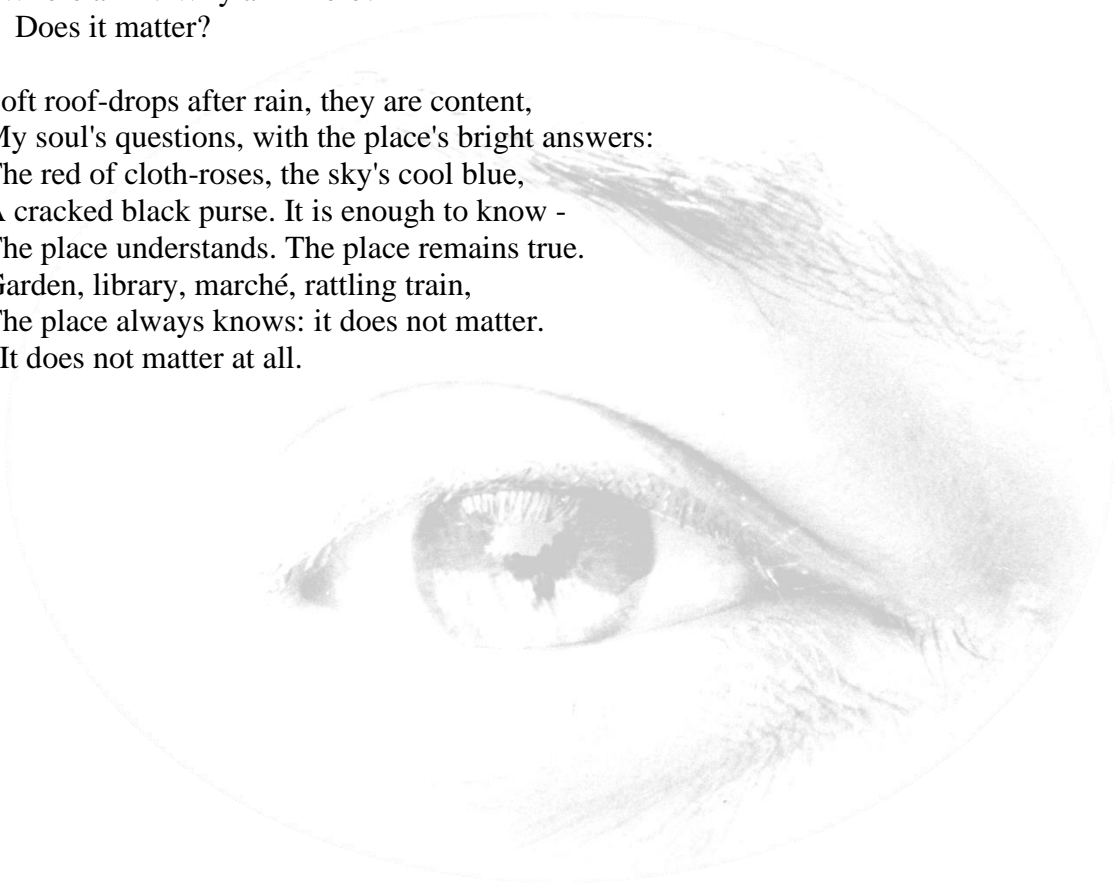


Hibah Shabkhez 1 poem

Open, Caraway

The place, breaking into shafts of colour
Is my confidante. Blending fruit rainbow
Swirl dreamspun in daylight, it filters your
Curious glances, leaves only questions
For the brain to turn over and over
In the soul's voice of detached amusement:
Where am I? Why am I here?
Does it matter?

Soft roof-drops after rain, they are content,
My soul's questions, with the place's bright answers:
The red of cloth-roses, the sky's cool blue,
A cracked black purse. It is enough to know -
The place understands. The place remains true.
Garden, library, marché, rattling train,
The place always knows: it does not matter.
It does not matter at all.



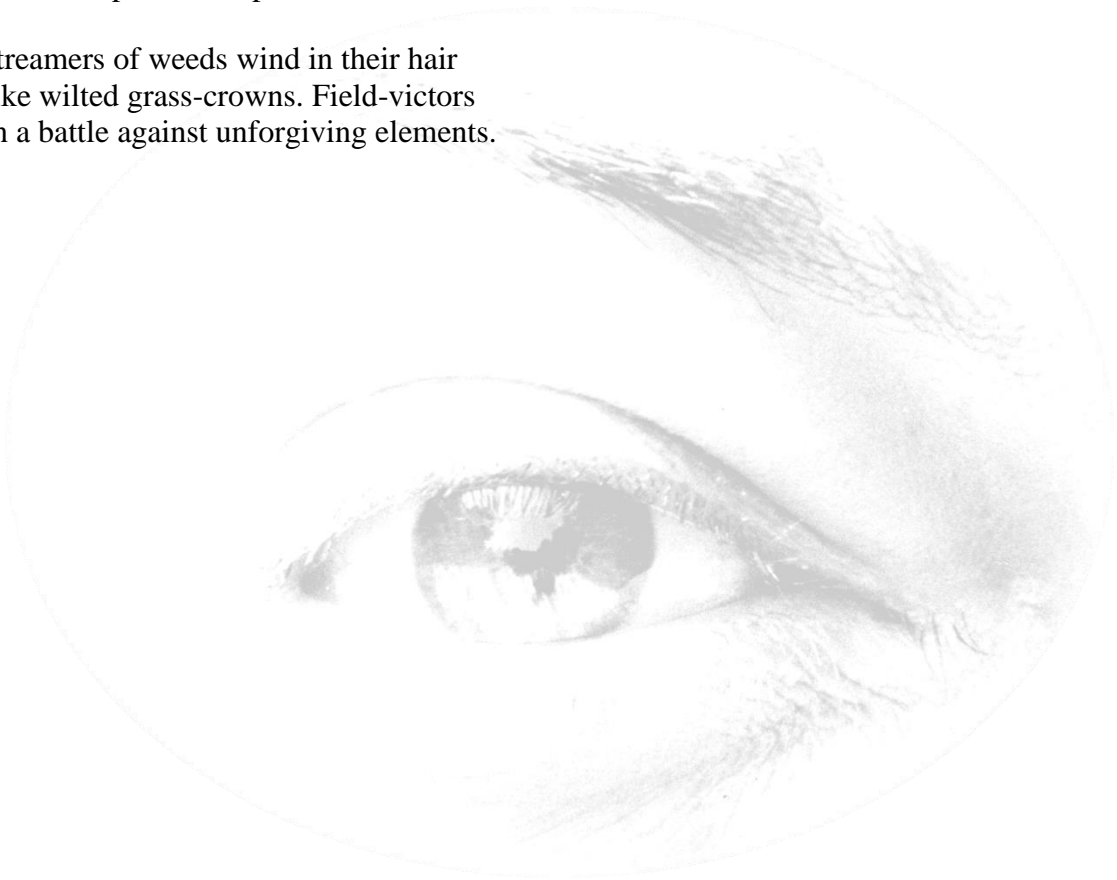
Carlene M. Gadapee 2 poems

After the Flood

A grim harvest of faces and bodies
become meat, no longer human.
Holds secrets too close, undiscovered.

Undistinguishable from the muck.
What might those mud-clotted mouths
tell me in pain or despair? Green

streamers of weeds wind in their hair
like wilted grass-crowns. Field-victors
in a battle against unforgiving elements.

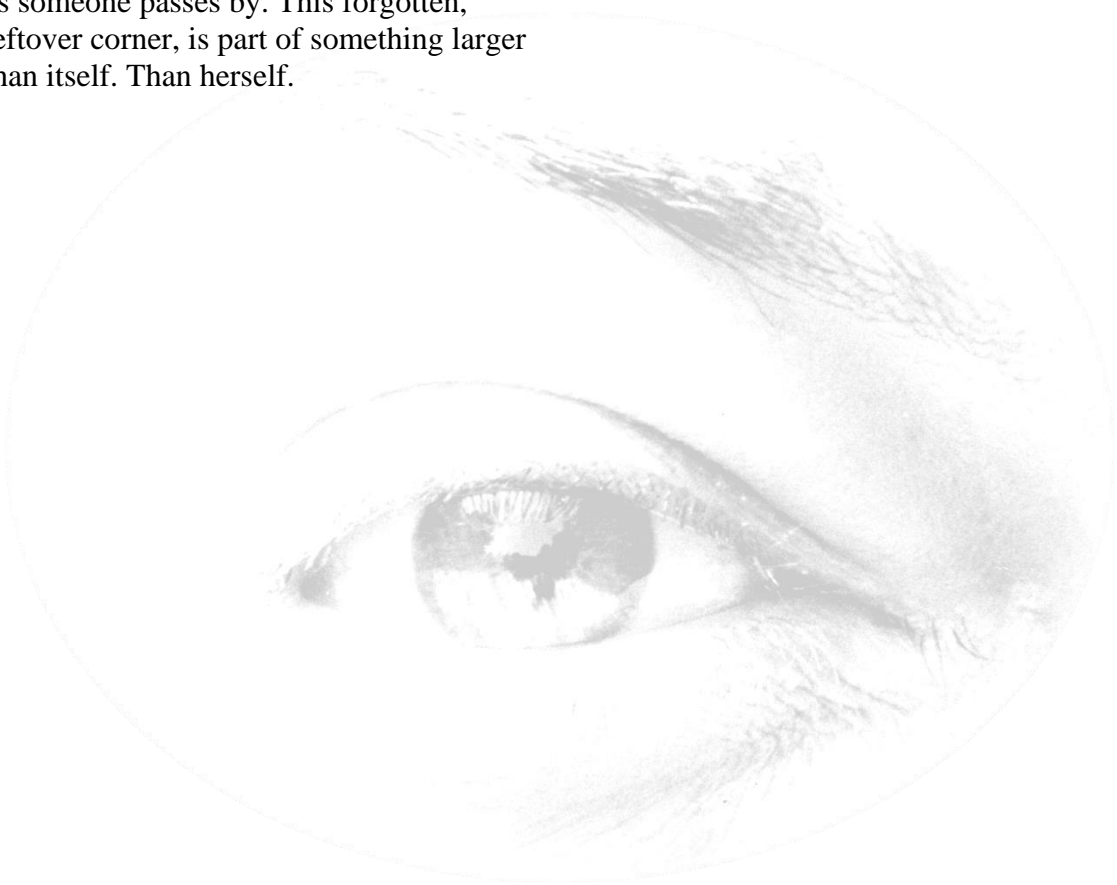


A Page from Jane Eyre's Diary

How like her, not to use a fresh piece
of paper, a white, blank, untouched
and unwrinkled sheet.

*Why do you ask me
for my reasons?*

Small words blend into tiny crevices.
Dry creases crackle and craze
the yellowed and torn piece
of scrap. Faded brown ink bleeds
into shredded edges: an acolyte's whisper,
not to disturb but to be heard, perhaps,
as someone passes by. This forgotten,
leftover corner, is part of something larger
than itself. Than herself.



Catherine Arra 1 poem

Like an Us

He said, write this for us.

I wondered if I've ever been an *us*
felt like an *us*.

More an *I* or *you* type of girl,
not, *I did this for us*

I did this for *you*
or I did this for *me*.

Us was a foreign word,
untranslatable

in a family burgeoning
with people and discord,

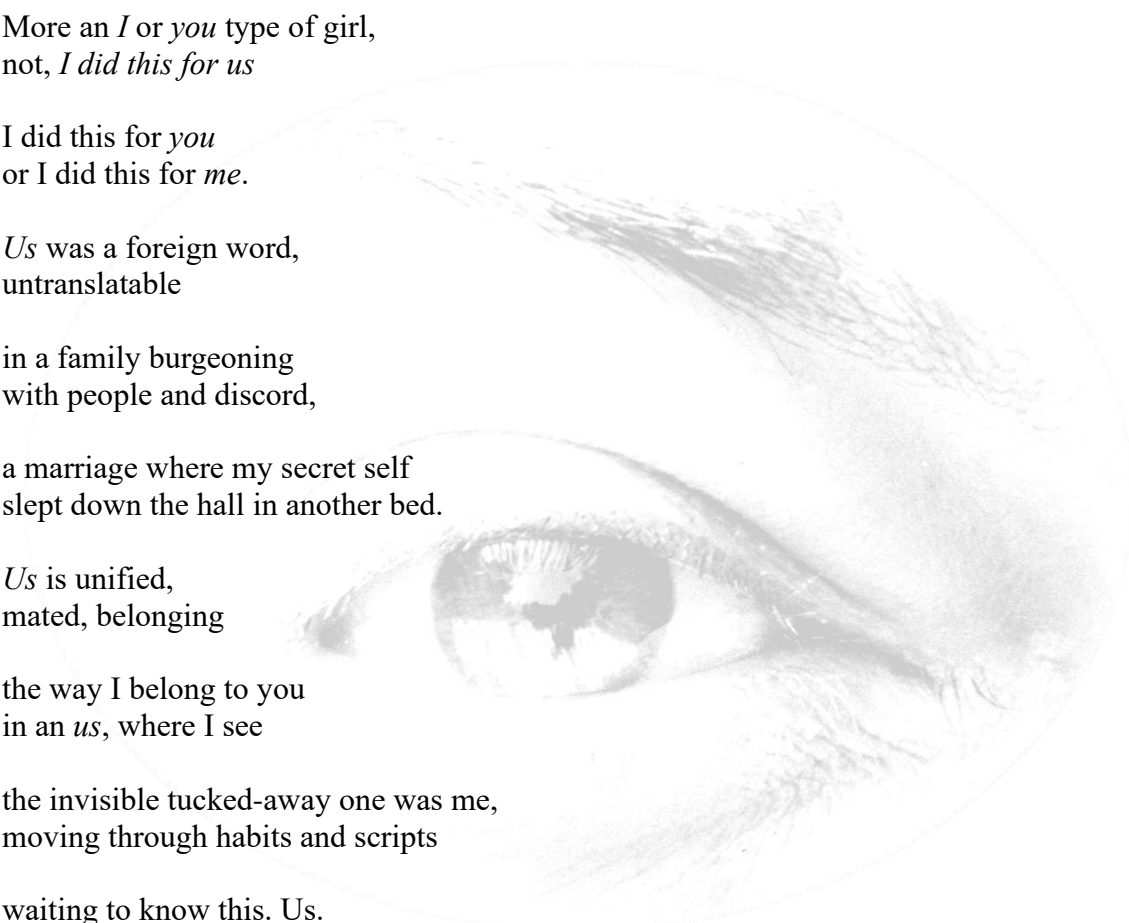
a marriage where my secret self
slept down the hall in another bed.

Us is unified,
mated, belonging

the way I belong to you
in an *us*, where I see

the invisible tucked-away one was me,
moving through habits and scripts

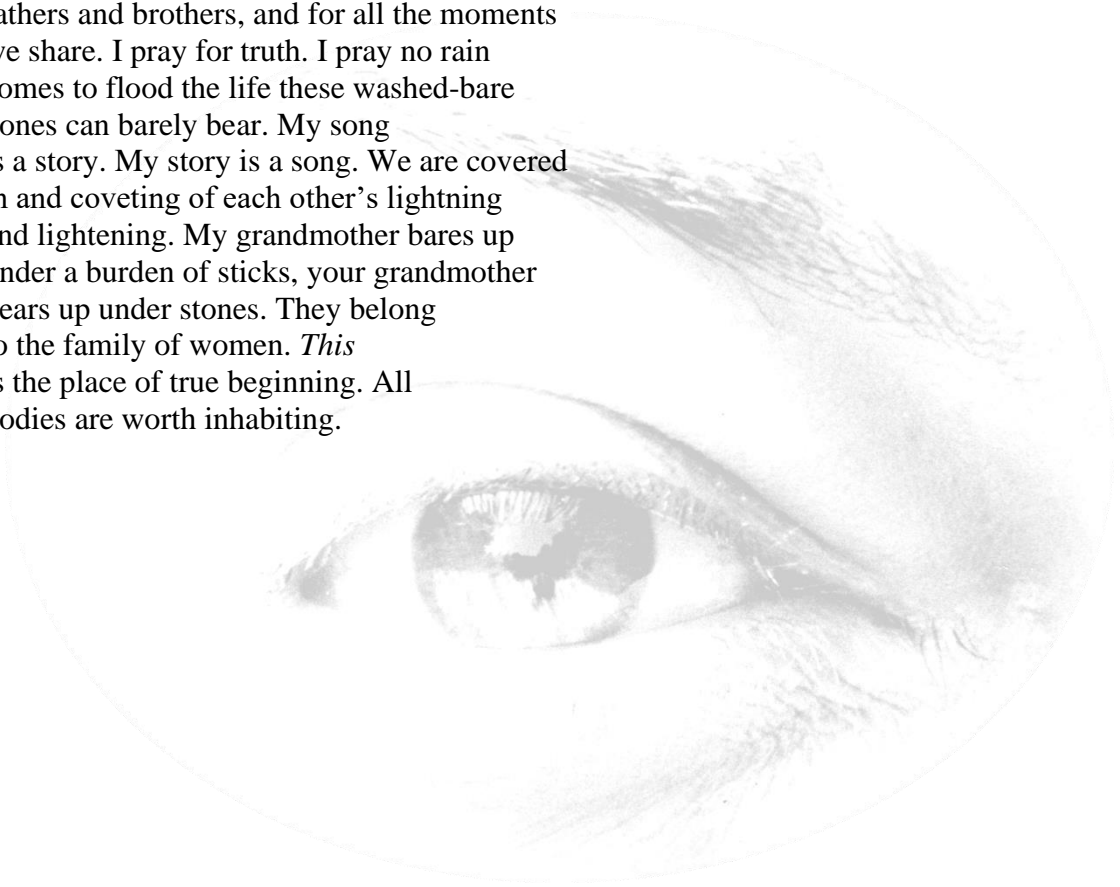
waiting to know this. *Us*.



Paula Coomer 1 poem

THE CROWD GROWS DIM

Tragedy comes in gray shades. No two twins are alike. Rain falls in sheets, except it doesn't. It is they: an army of droplets. Pink is the true color of only one kind of skin. Sickness makes us all gray. I pray for you always, my dark mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers, and for all the moments we share. I pray for truth. I pray no rain comes to flood the life these washed-bare bones can barely bear. My song is a story. My story is a song. We are covered in and coveting of each other's lightning and lightening. My grandmother bares up under a burden of sticks, your grandmother bears up under stones. They belong to the family of women. *This* is the place of true beginning. All bodies are worth inhabiting.



Alex Stolis 1 poem

RIP Winston Smith

Julia Passes Winston a Note

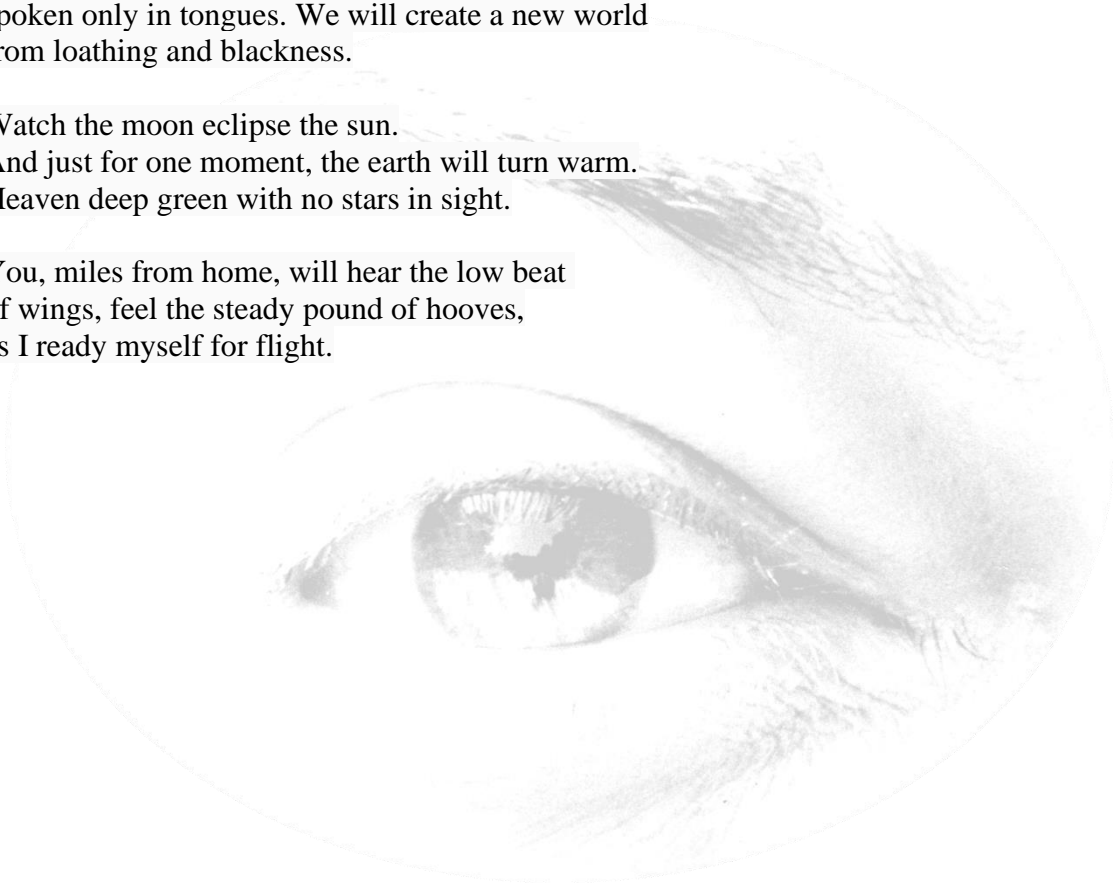
I'm good at spotting people who don't belong.

I'm a girl on a dragon-fly on the back of a horse
headed straight into the wind
under an unbreakable sky.

We are invented words in an invented language
spoken only in tongues. We will create a new world
from loathing and blackness.

Watch the moon eclipse the sun.
And just for one moment, the earth will turn warm.
Heaven deep green with no stars in sight.

You, miles from home, will hear the low beat
of wings, feel the steady pound of hooves,
as I ready myself for flight.



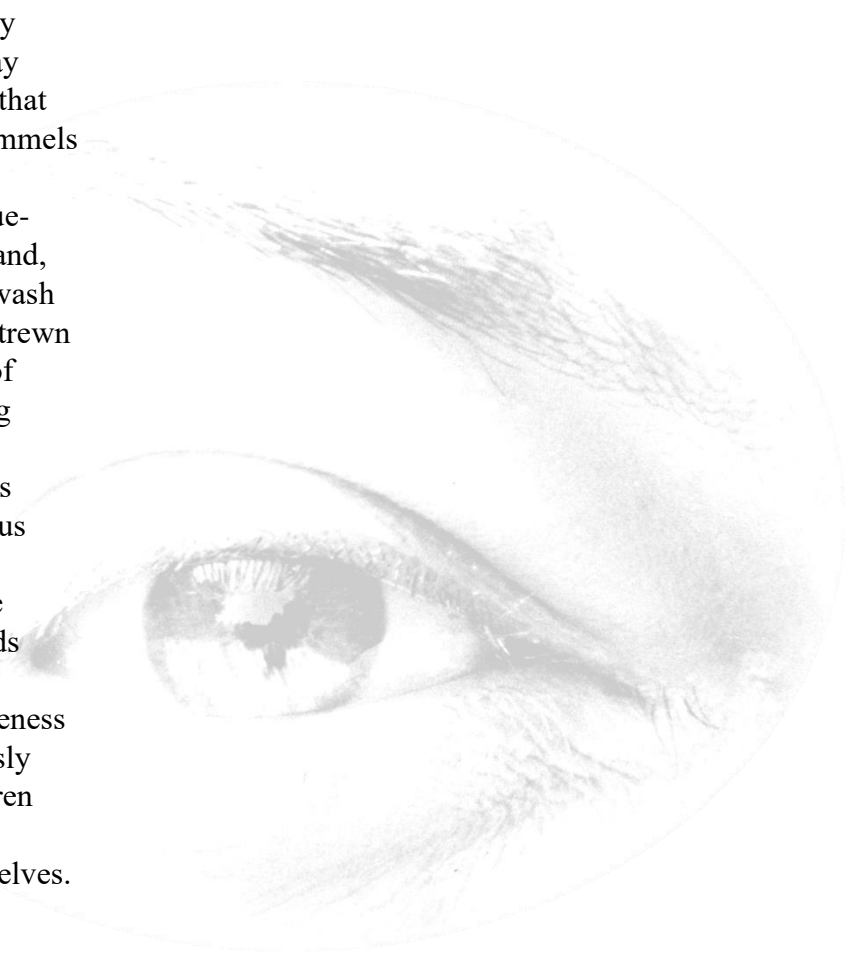
John Muro 3 poems

Aphrodite Resurfaces

- *Inspired by a seaside fresco*

Might those ghostly hands
of peeling plaster calm,
at last, the wind's hurry
into motionless air, stay
the curse and carnage that
comes when water pummels
outcrops of coral and
metamorphic rock, blue-
white tides battering land,
and the swirling backwash
exposing a shoreline strewn
with gaudy bracelets of
plastic pearl? Knowing
this tender earth could
well end here, she rises
and startles the delirious
gulls and all manner
of living things, as she
closes her eyes, extends
cupped hands like a
mother seeking forgiveness
and offering to selflessly
endure what her children
cannot and, with luck,
save them from themselves.

~

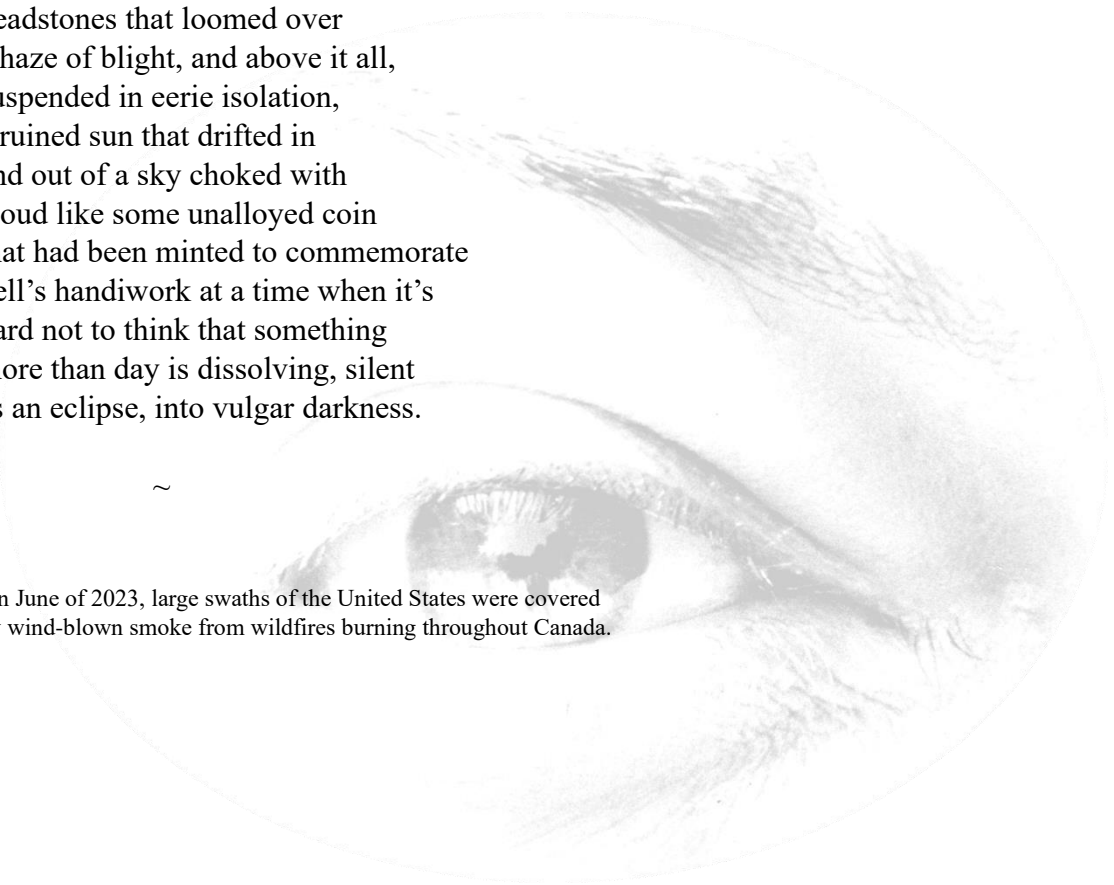


How Darkness Fell *

It's as if a vast expanse of dusk
had assailed the world and
morning's brief beauty had
convulsed and been emptied
of light, leaving behind a
coarsened landscape of dead-
water gray and bird-less air
that carried the pungent odor
of smoldering ash, while, in
the distance, the vague outlines
of buildings appeared like
headstones that loomed over
a haze of blight, and above it all,
suspended in eerie isolation,
a ruined sun that drifted in
and out of a sky choked with
cloud like some unalloyed coin
that had been minted to commemorate
hell's handiwork at a time when it's
hard not to think that something
more than day is dissolving, silent
as an eclipse, into vulgar darkness.

~

*In June of 2023, large swaths of the United States were covered
by wind-blown smoke from wildfires burning throughout Canada.



Nighthawk

- *After Edward Hopper*

Outside, an intermittent rain has ended
though it feels as if the whole world is weeping
and grown weary with life

amid this curious jumble of wealth
and wreckage when evening is leaning
so very close to day.

I choose to dream myself away here,
over coffee, like these quiet souls enduring
loneliness without the means

to tease it out. Knowing full well
that they, too, have been
cast off like worn patches from life's sharp elbow.

Each homesick, each certain there is nothing
left to return to, and all well acquainted with
heartache's fealty and its intent to follow them home

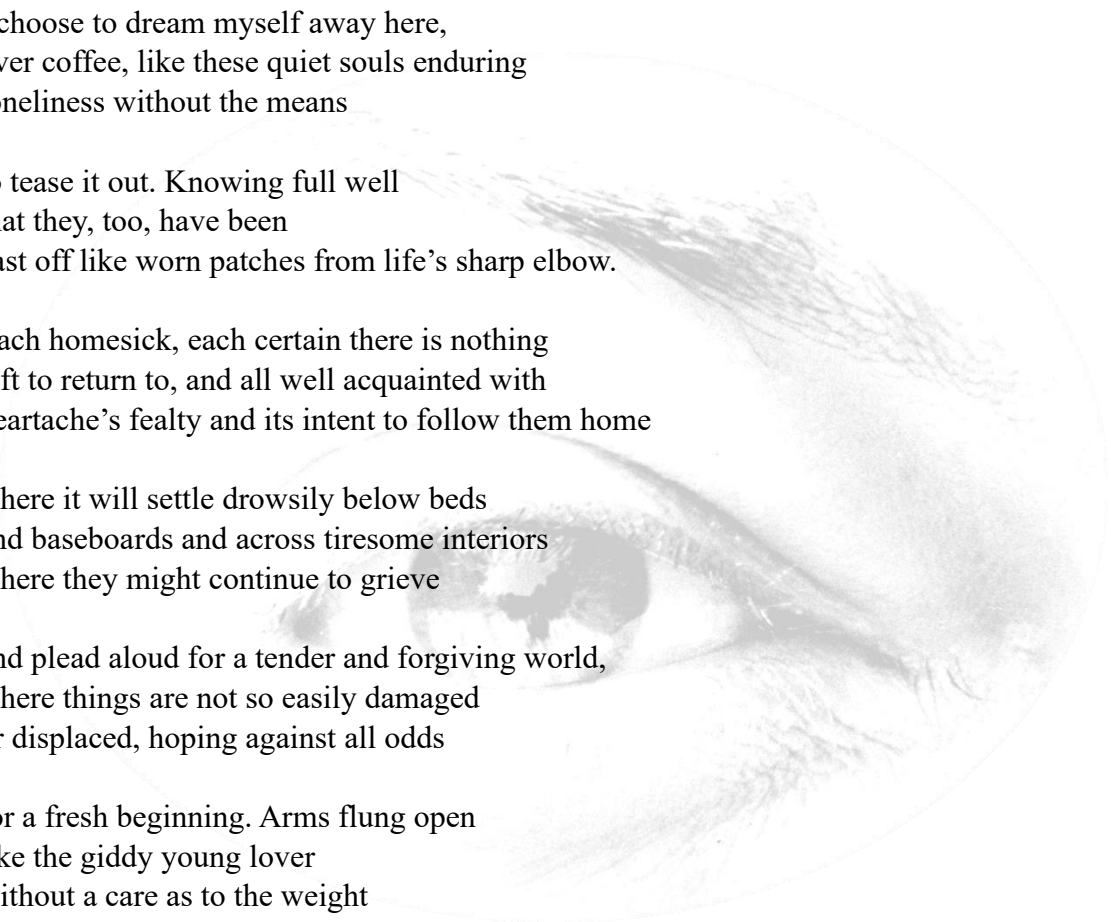
where it will settle drowsily below beds
and baseboards and across tiresome interiors
where they might continue to grieve

and plead aloud for a tender and forgiving world,
where things are not so easily damaged
or displaced, hoping against all odds

for a fresh beginning. Arms flung open
like the giddy young lover
without a care as to the weight

of grief or cost of having to live on the margin.

~



Erin Ratigan 1 poem

The Artist

i

The crickets are performing
their symphonies-
the only sound apart from the damp clay
snapping under her palms.

The ball beneath her fingers is cool
like the breeze
from the open doorway.

She adds water and the clay glides smoother.
Earth and water are so soft.
Soon, fire
will make it hard.

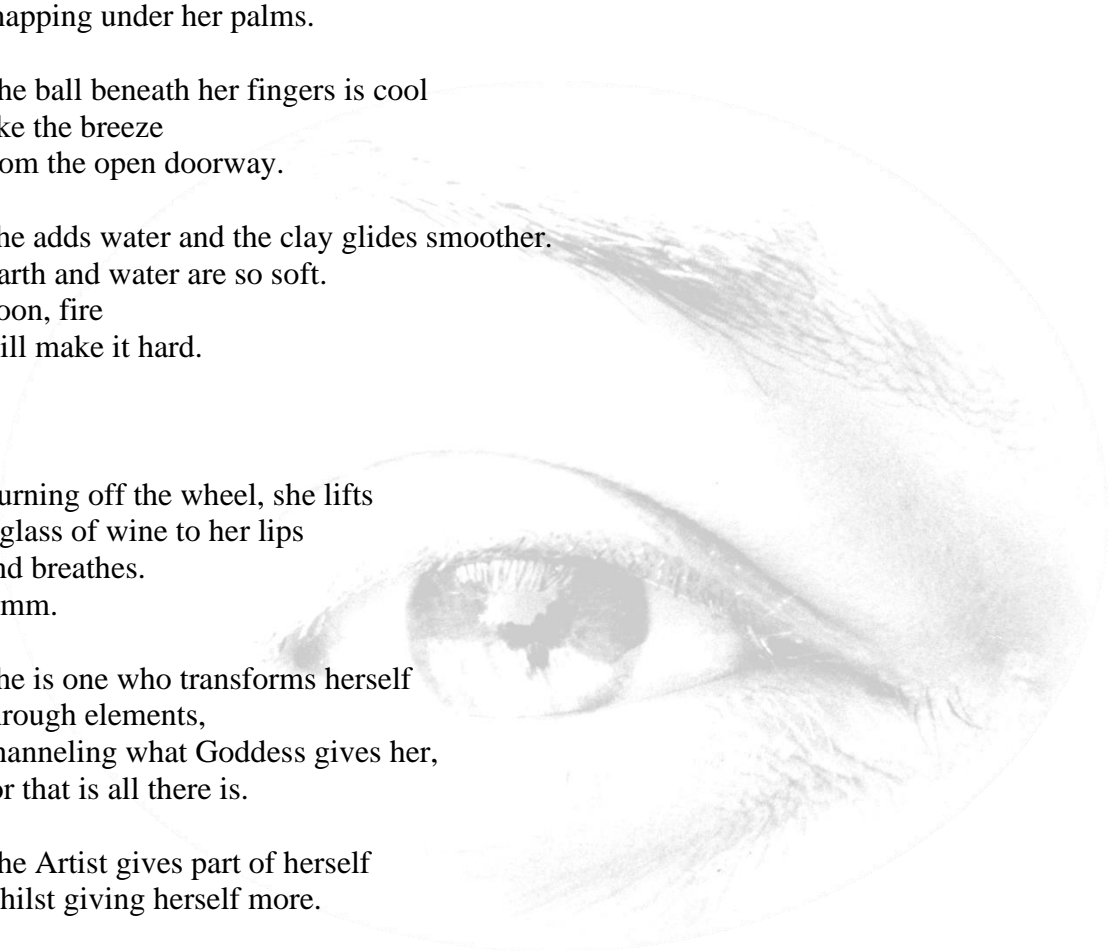
ii

Turning off the wheel, she lifts
a glass of wine to her lips
and breathes.
Hmm.

She is one who transforms herself
through elements,
channeling what Goddess gives her,
for that is all there is.

The Artist gives part of herself
whilst giving herself more.

She thinks this must be
what it's like to have children.



Alison Stone 1 poem

The Woman Who Didn't Respond When Solomon Suggested Cutting the Baby in Half Speaks Now

What fool could believe that I'd be satisfied
with half a corpse? Or even that Solomon
had the audacity to slice through bone?

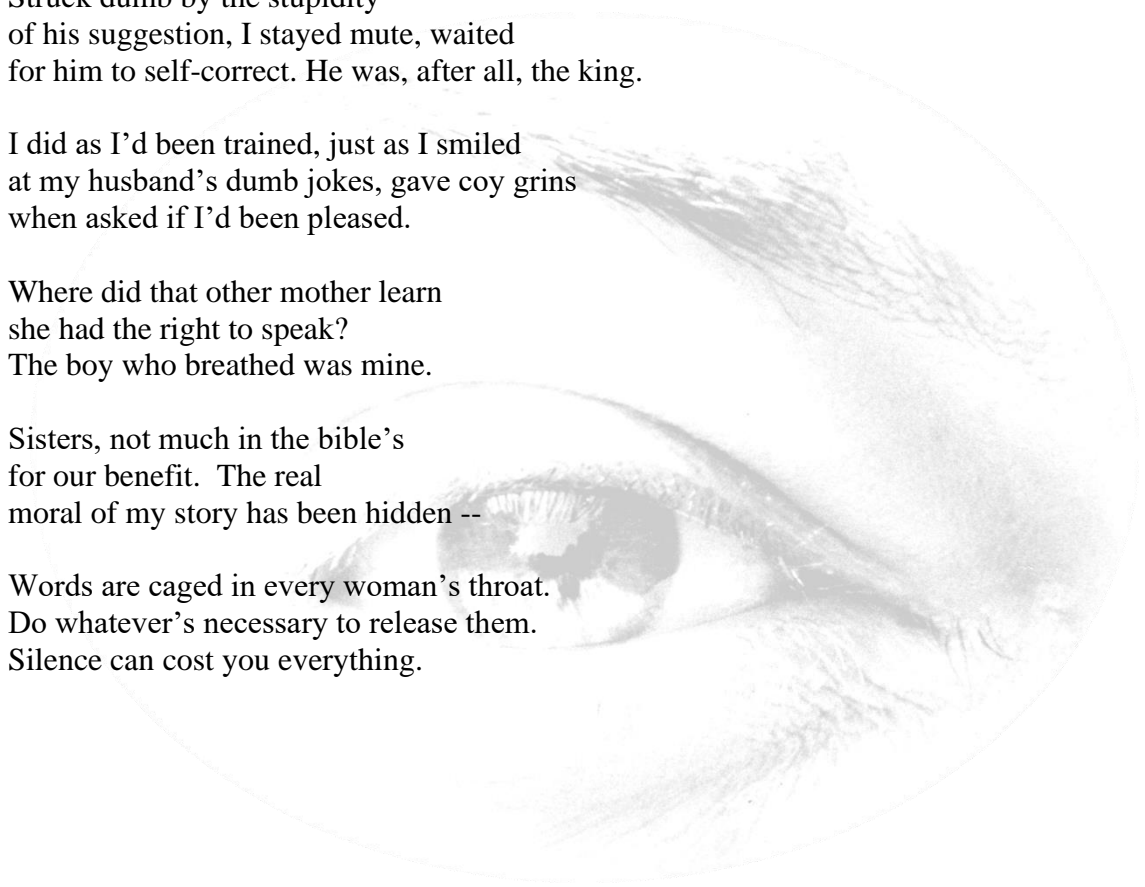
Struck dumb by the stupidity
of his suggestion, I stayed mute, waited
for him to self-correct. He was, after all, the king.

I did as I'd been trained, just as I smiled
at my husband's dumb jokes, gave coy grins
when asked if I'd been pleased.

Where did that other mother learn
she had the right to speak?
The boy who breathed was mine.

Sisters, not much in the bible's
for our benefit. The real
moral of my story has been hidden --

Words are caged in every woman's throat.
Do whatever's necessary to release them.
Silence can cost you everything.



Diane Frank 1 poem

Ghost Boat

A ghost boat appears in a dream.
Nobody in the boat.
Just floating at the edge of the Sea of Azov.
Sea water in the wood.

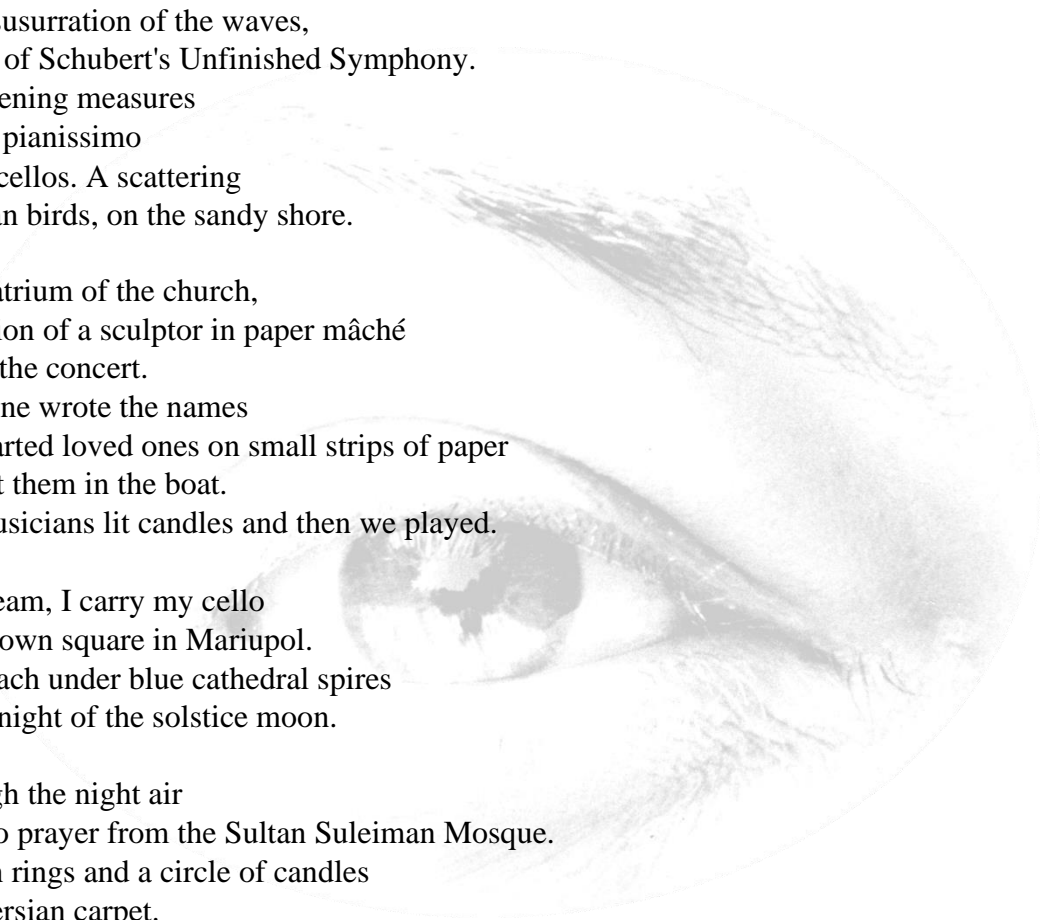
In the susurrations of the waves,
echoes of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony.
The opening measures
bowed pianissimo
by the cellos. A scattering
of ocean birds, on the sandy shore.

In the atrium of the church,
the vision of a sculptor in paper mâché
before the concert.
Everyone wrote the names
of departed loved ones on small strips of paper
and put them in the boat.
The musicians lit candles and then we played.

In a dream, I carry my cello
to the town square in Mariupol.
Play Bach under blue cathedral spires
on the night of the solstice moon.

Through the night air
a call to prayer from the Sultan Suleiman Mosque.
Golden rings and a circle of candles
on a Persian carpet.

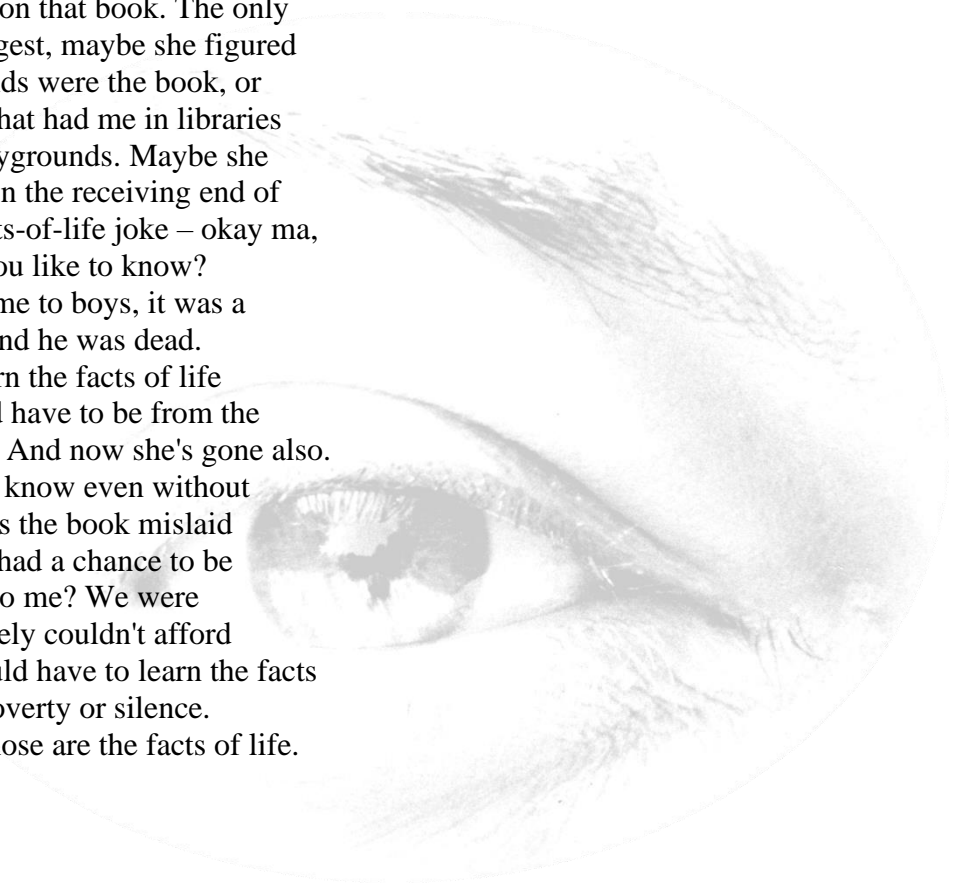
I light candles inside the reliquary boat
of the Unfinished Symphony
as sunset dissolves into a chorus
of refugees, singing
a requiem at the sandy edge of the waves.



John Grey 2 poems

FACTS OF LIFE

For my sisters, it was a small book
passed surreptitiously from my mother
to their eager teenage hands. They already
knew the lascivious details. But this
was the science, prominently illustrated
with diagrams of their insides
and a man's outsides. I still haven't
got my hands on that book. The only
boy, the youngest, maybe she figured
my older friends were the book, or
my curiosity that had me in libraries
more than playgrounds. Maybe she
feared being on the receiving end of
that hoary facts-of-life joke – okay ma,
what would you like to know?
Or when it came to boys, it was a
father's duty and he was dead.
If I was to learn the facts of life
at all, it would have to be from the
facts of death. And now she's gone also.
I know what I know even without
that book. Was the book mislaid
before it ever had a chance to be
passed down to me? We were
poor, most likely couldn't afford
another. I would have to learn the facts
of life from poverty or silence.
Sometimes, those are the facts of life.



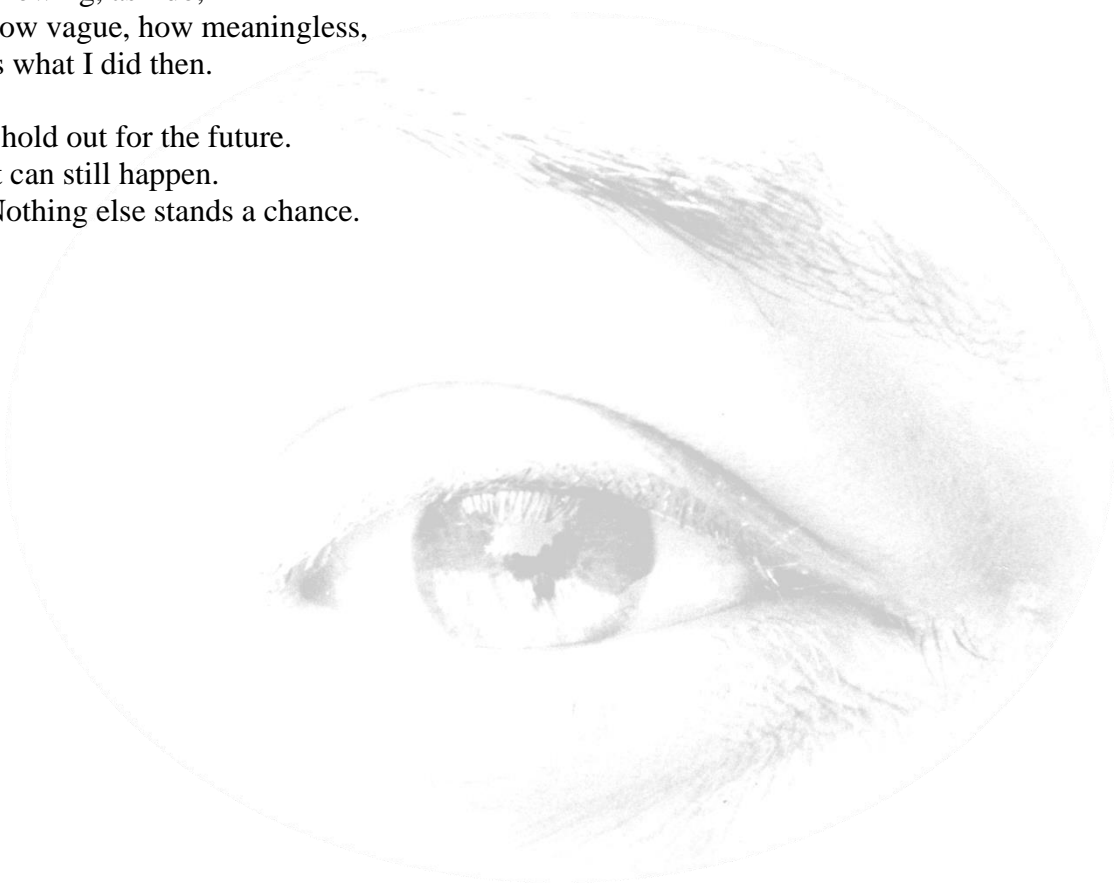
THIS WAY FORWARD

With each new journey
I forget more
of where I was born.

I go forward
because it's so much harder
to find traction in the past.

I sometimes wonder
what will become of all
the things I'm doing now
knowing, as I do,
how vague, how meaningless,
is what I did then.

I hold out for the future.
It can still happen.
Nothing else stands a chance.



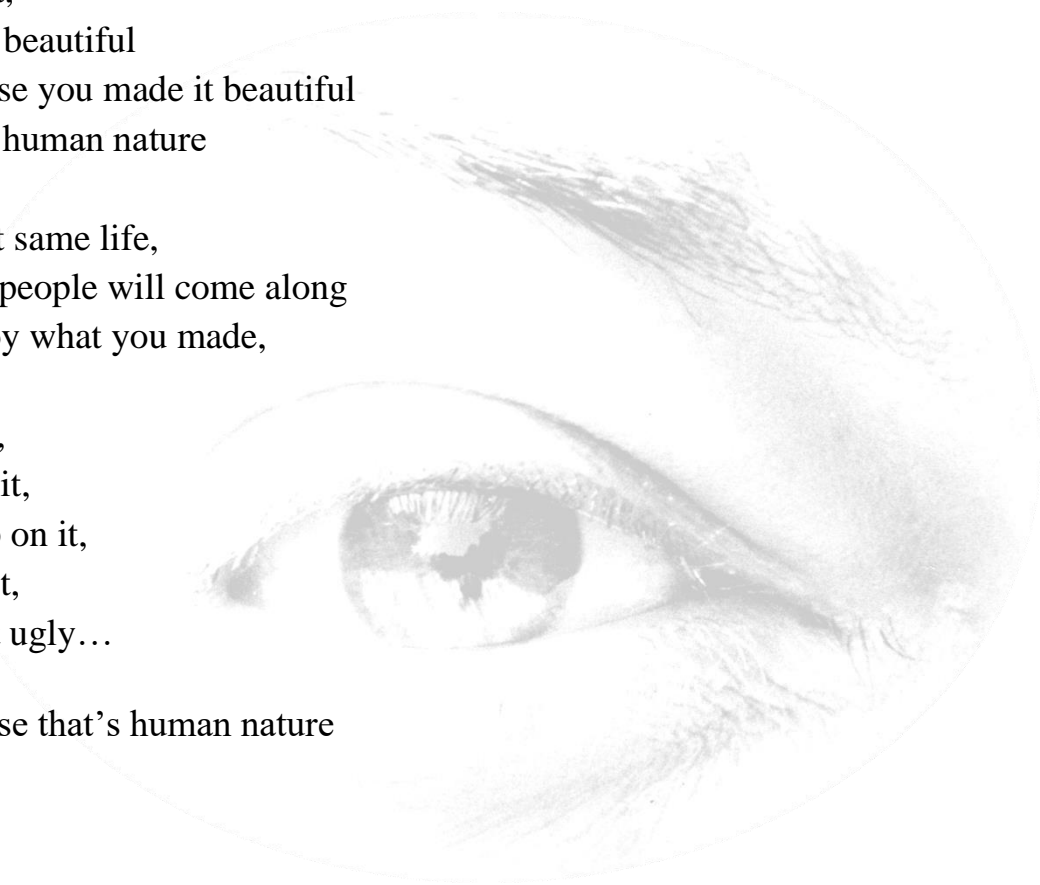
Allison Whittenberg 1 poem

Loop

in your life,
you will have something that you cherish
and you will nurture it,
tend to it,
love it,
call it beautiful
because you made it beautiful
that's human nature

in that same life,
some people will come along
destroy what you made,
rip it,
tear it,
crush it,
stomp on it,
marr it,
turn it ugly...

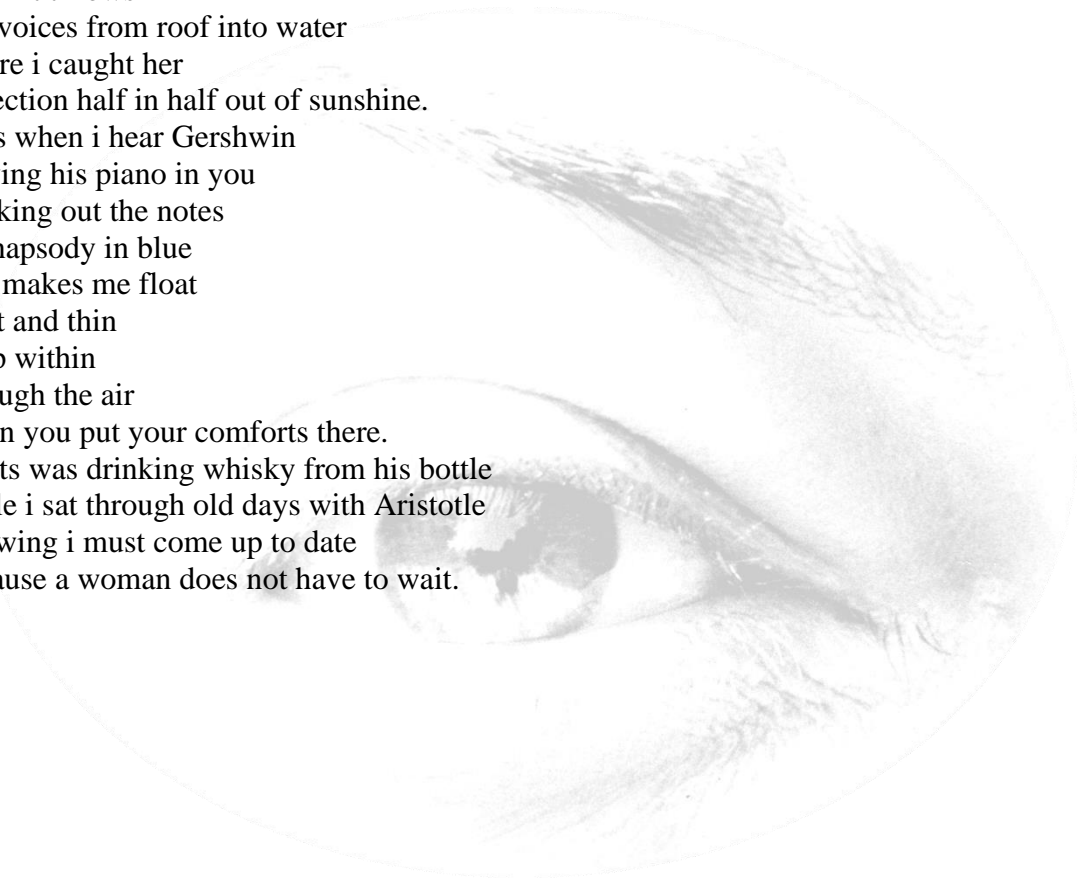
because that's human nature



Strider Marcus Jones 4 poems

A WOMAN DOES NOT HAVE TO WAIT

under the old canal bridge you said
so i can hear the echoes
in your head
repeating mine
this time
when it throws
our voices from roof into water
where i caught her
reflection half in half out of sunshine.
thats when i hear Gershwin
playing his piano in you
working out the notes
to rhapsody in blue
that makes me float
light and thin
deep within
through the air
when you put your comforts there.
Waits was drinking whisky from his bottle
while i sat through old days with Aristotle
knowing i must come up to date
because a woman does not have to wait.



THE TWO SALTIMBANQUES

when words don't come easy
they make do with silence
and find something in nothing
to say to each other
when the absinthe runs out.

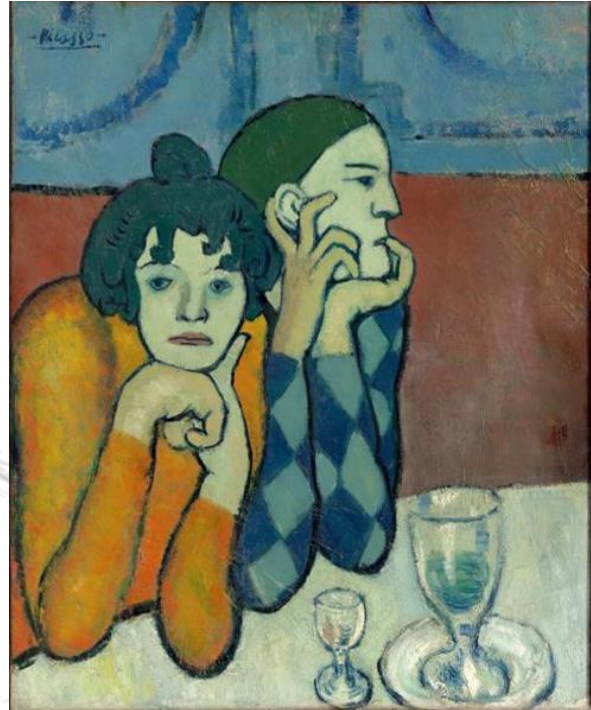
his glass and ego
are bigger than hers,
his elbows sharper,
stabbing into the table
and the chambers of her heart
cobalt clown
without a smile.

she looks away
with his misery behind her eyes
and sadness on her lips,
back into her curves
and the orange grove
summer of her dress
worn and blown by sepia time

where she painted
her cockus giganticus
lying down
naked
for her brush and skin,
mingling intimate scents
undoing and doing each other.

for some of us,
living back then
is more going forward
than living in now
and sitting here-

at this table,
with these glasses
standing empty of absinthe,
faces wanting hands
to be a bridge of words
and equal peace
as Guernica approaches.



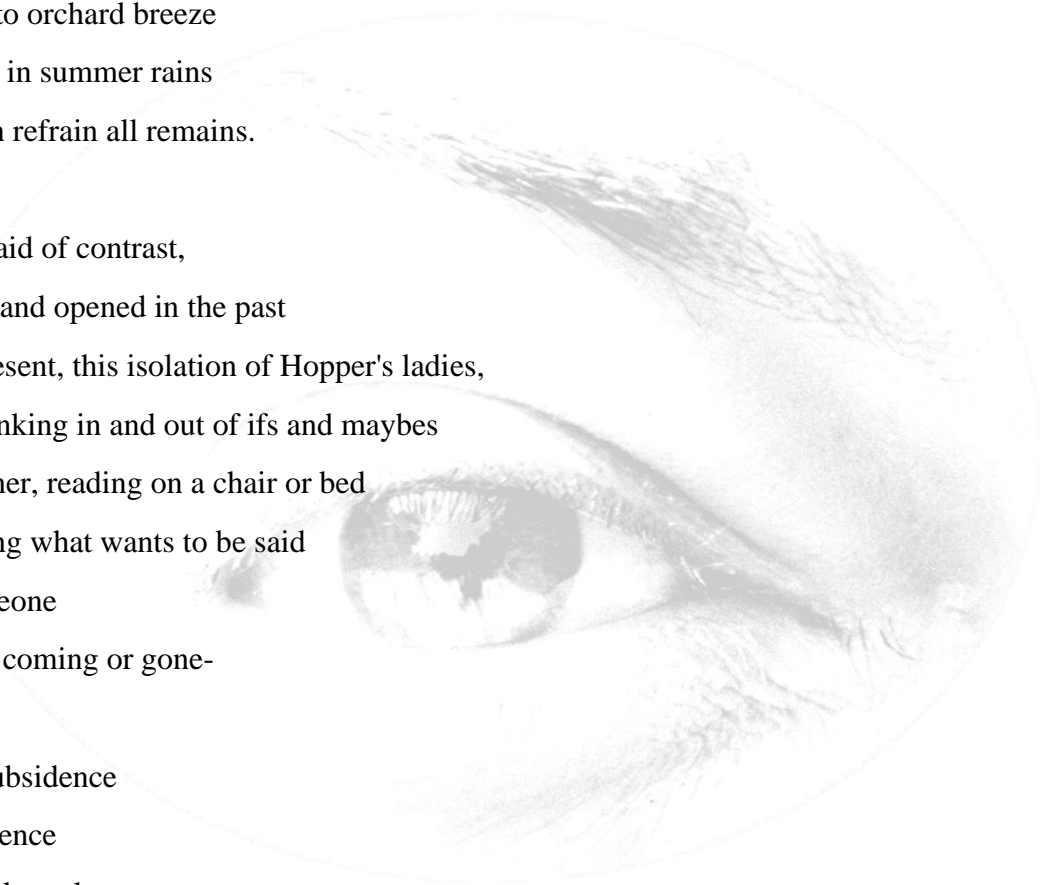
Ekphrastic Poem After Picasso's Painting – The Two Saltimbanques

HOPPER'S LADIES

you stay and grow
more misterioso
but familiar
in my interior-
with voices peeled
full of field
of fruiting orange trees
fertile to orchard breeze
soaked in summer rains
so each refrain all remains.

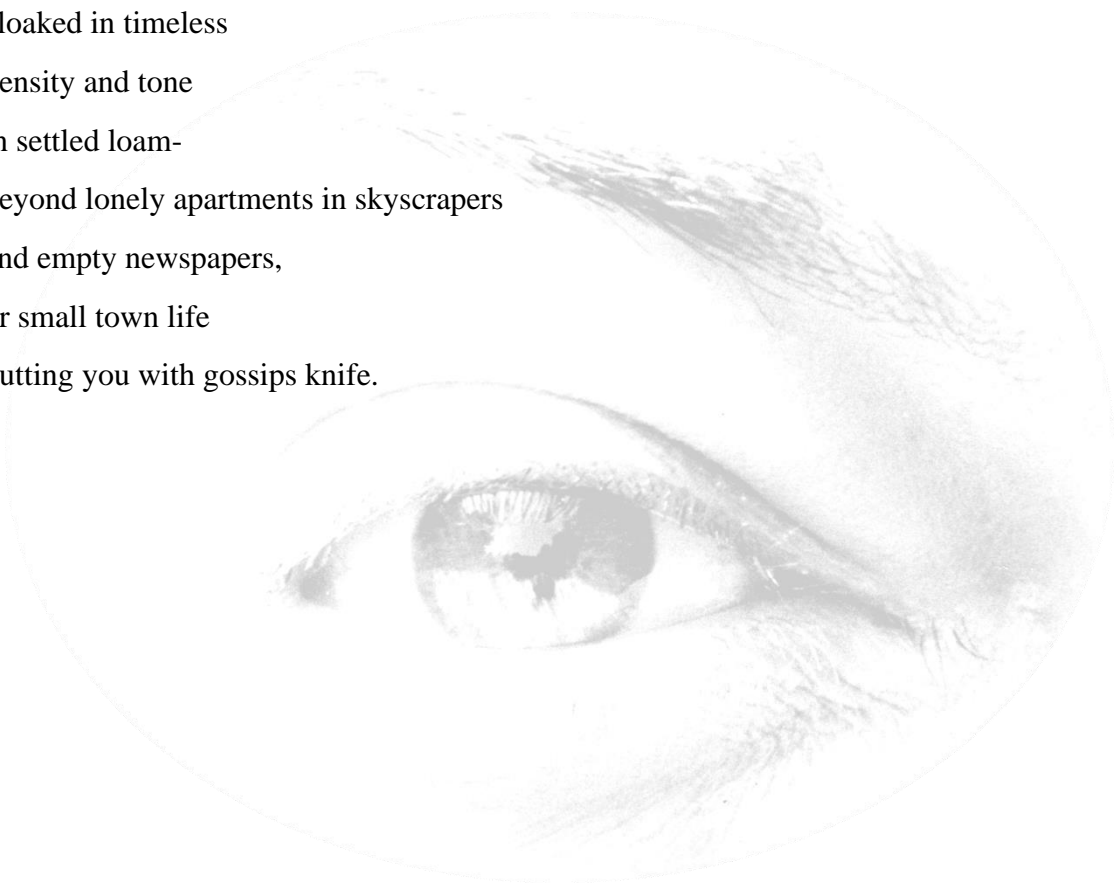
not afraid of contrast,
closed and opened in the past
and present, this isolation of Hopper's ladies,
sat, thinking in and out of ifs and maybes
in a diner, reading on a chair or bed
knowing what wants to be said
to someone
who is coming or gone-

such subsidence
into silence
is a unilateral curve
of moments
and movements
that swerve
a straight lifetime
to independence
in dependence
touching sublime
rich roots



then ripe fruits.

we share their flesh and flutes
in ribosomes and delicious shoots
that release love-
no, not just the fingered glove
to wear
and curl up with in a chair,
but lovingkindness
cloaked in timeless
density and tone
in settled loam-
beyond lonely apartments in skyscrapers
and empty newspapers,
or small town life
gutting you with gossips knife.



OVIRI (The Savage - Paul Gauguin in Tahiti)

woman,
wearing the conscience of the world-
you make me want
less civilisation
and more meaning.

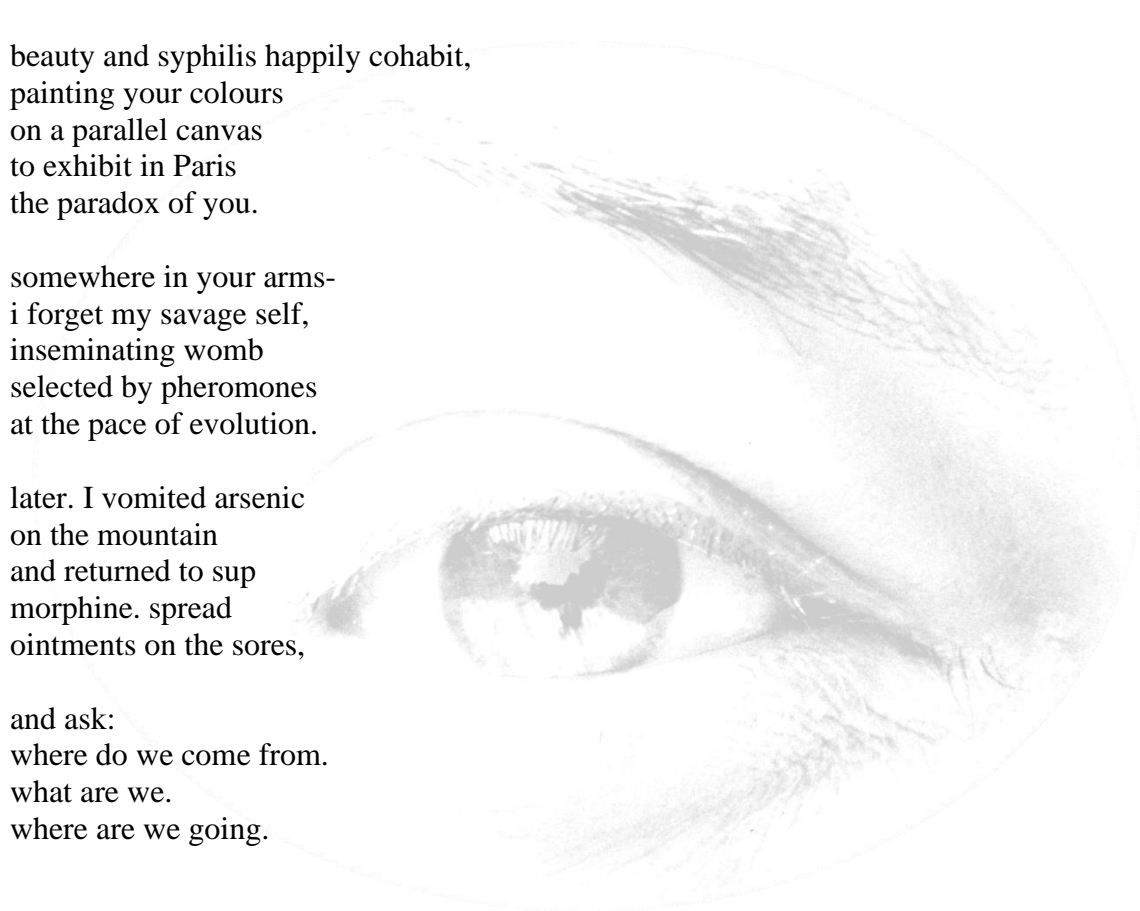
drinking absinthe together,
hand rolling and smoking cigars-
being is, what it really is-
fucking on palm leaves
under tropical rain.

beauty and syphilis happily cohabit,
painting your colours
on a parallel canvas
to exhibit in Paris
the paradox of you.

somewhere in your arms-
i forget my savage self,
inseminating womb
selected by pheromones
at the pace of evolution.

later. I vomited arsenic
on the mountain
and returned to sup
morphine. spread
ointments on the sores,

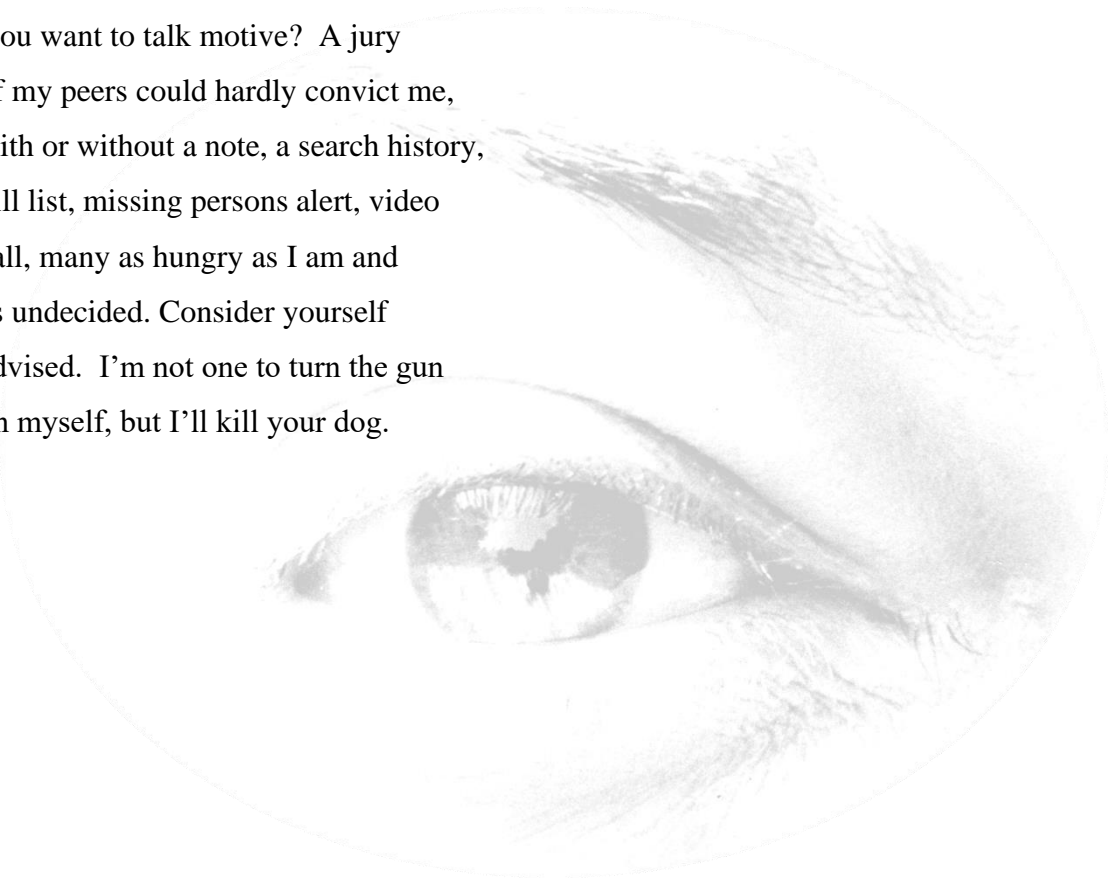
and ask:
where do we come from.
what are we.
where are we going.



Douglas K. Currier 3 poems

Passerby

I should warn you, I haven't had
a kind word in days, nor a sandwich.
Not a cookie has passed these lips.
These are dangerous times.
You want to talk motive? A jury
of my peers could hardly convict me,
with or without a note, a search history,
kill list, missing persons alert, video
call, many as hungry as I am and
as undecided. Consider yourself
advised. I'm not one to turn the gun
on myself, but I'll kill your dog.



Wrath of God

Sometimes breathing is enough to set him off.

I'd say it was free will, but it depends on which god.

It's never anything as elementary as the elemental.

He doesn't shout wind through a twisting megaphone

or mutter any sort of deluge – after all, he promised Noah.

Earthquakes, tsunamis – all the quaint names for disruption

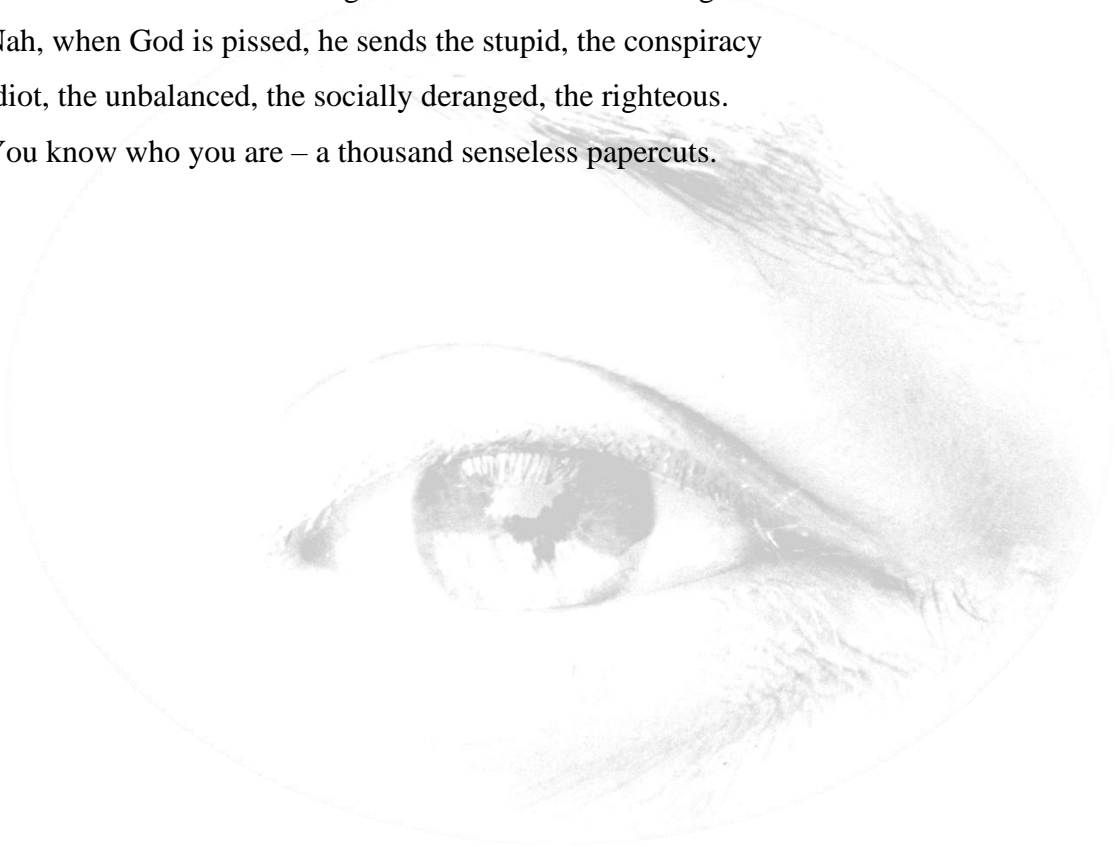
– mud slide, forest fire, hail/rain/snowstorm, running bull,

walks on water – all the imagination of a child or a savage.

Nah, when God is pissed, he sends the stupid, the conspiracy

idiot, the unbalanced, the socially deranged, the righteous.

You know who you are – a thousand senseless papercuts.



La nuit

une

*Et j'étais nue dans le souvenir de la nuit blanche. J'étais ivre
es j'ai fait l'amour toute la nuit, exactement comme
chienne malade.*

The night undresses what the day contrives,
strips us of the critical light for the pleasures
of the sightless, covers the brutality
of longing with a shroud. Ask any escaped
housecat, any stray, about the sweet sickness
of what's wanted in the dark.

La nuit s'ouvre seule fois.

Only one opportunity, so often it's the night
who can't wait – hurrying dusk, shedding
clothes and lovers, taking in trees and bushes,
bridges and the cheat light of water,
to hide from the moon.

Et je sais bien de quoi es fait la nuit.

I am waiting for her to celebrate darkness.
I wear only my anonymity and forget
the peeping stars, the leering, lecherous moon.
The damp night wind smells of sex and stale
perfume. There is license for the taking.

*Perte la plus pure. Mais qui me dira: ne pleure plus dans la
nuit? Parce qu'aussi la folie est un mensonge. Comme la nuit.
Comme la mort.*

« Le Sexe, La Nuit » Alejandra Pizarnik

The night holds no grudge. It's all as
blameless as the mad, the night herself,
and death. She refuses to judge
what transpires under the cover she provides.
Like the abyss, she is curious and enjoys
being looked at unaccountably naked.

Gayle Lauradunn 1 poem

Tribal Shorts

Go high Michelle says *Go high*.
She has had a lot of practice
being black, being woman.
the rest of us will have to learn.

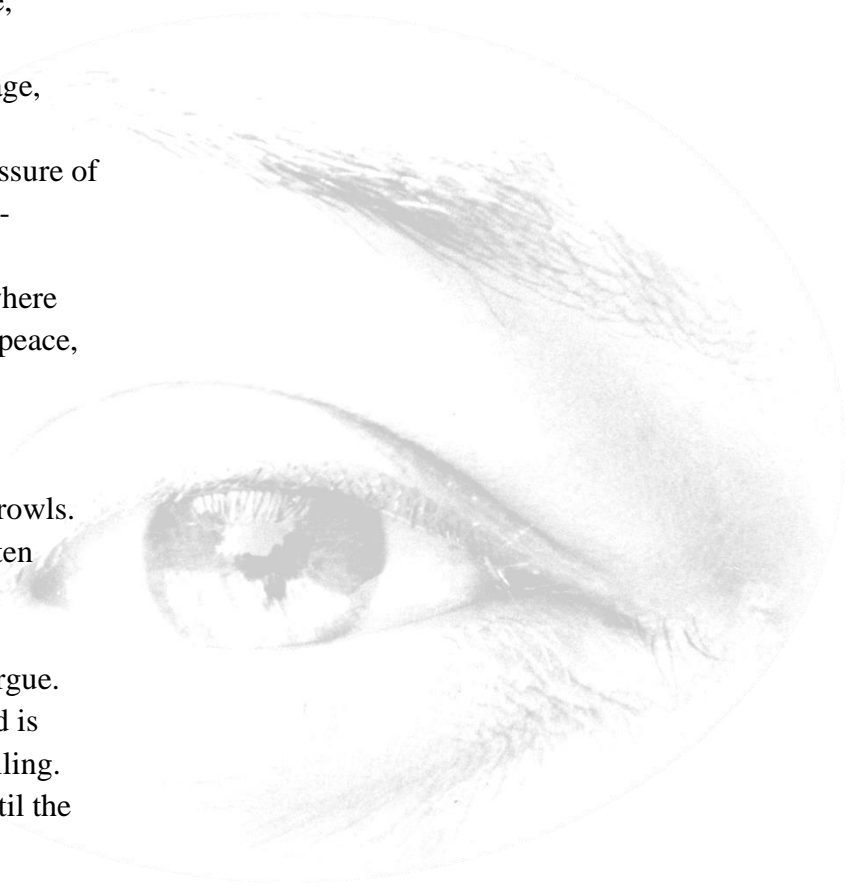
The doctor asked if I was
feeling depressed.
Oh, no, I'm joyful the water
will be diseased
the national parks will cease
to exist, medical care
a thing of the past. Shall
I go on? Oil spills will occur
in every ocean without penalty.
No, I'm not depressed. Just
wish I lived another time another place.

Last year in Norway the woman
who has lived seventy years
in a tiny village on the Sognefjord
asked why those people hate Obama.
They are Republicans, I said.
She nodded pensively, *They*
certainly are, she said.

Trier Ward 2 poems

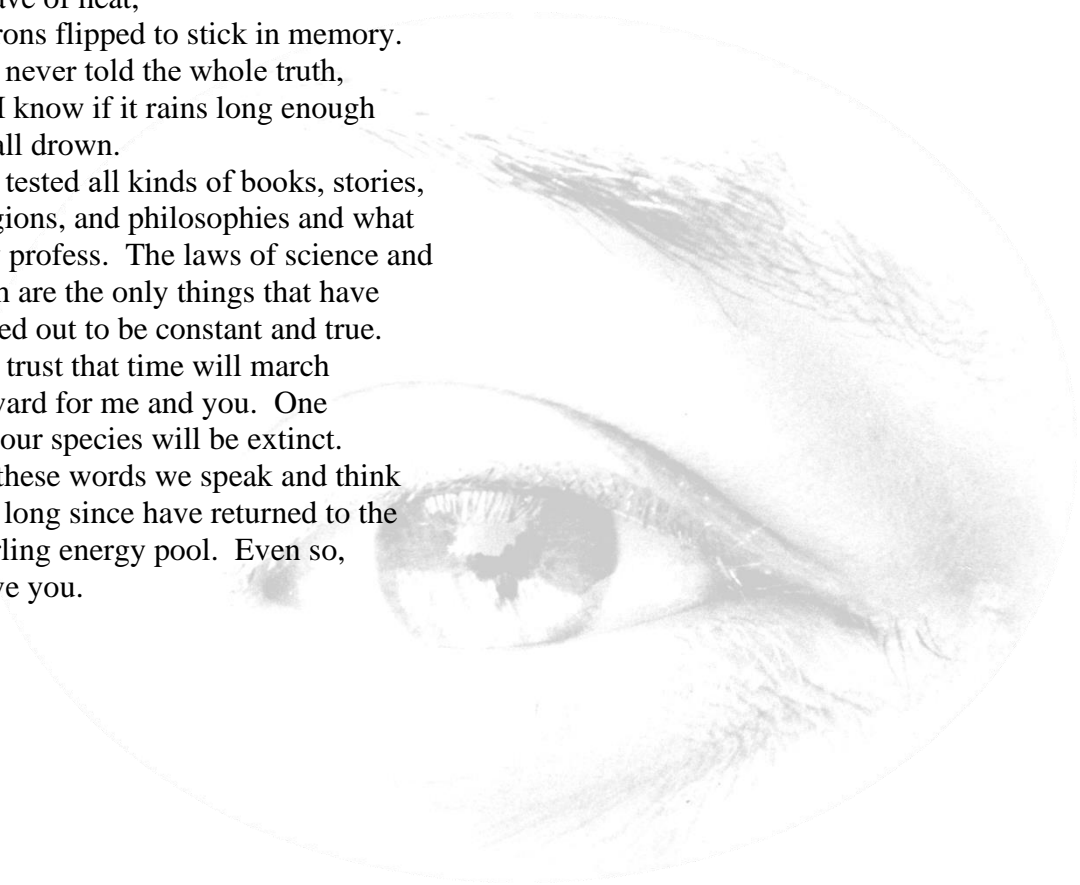
The Art of Escape

Cages can be very complex
or very simple.
The trick is not the lock,
it is the integrity
of the emptiness.
A womb can be a cage,
or a skull.
A mansion can be a cage,
or an ocean.
Apprehension, the pressure of
a void that is too great-
creates a vacuum,
swirling whirlwinds where
there should be quiet, peace,
there is noise,
constant noise.
A frenetic tiger
paces his rounds, he growls.
Walls moan and threaten
to implode. Thoughts
gallop and careen.
Gods mutter. Devils argue.
Finally, the only sound is
one high frequency tolling.
The lights brighten until the
only color is white.
Deaf and blind,
a spirit cannot fly.
Overwhelmed,
locked in-
a body is a cage,
a mind is a cage.
What is the way out-
Where is the key to release the
energy of deep passions,
brave fantasies and true love,
the key that that will
transform matter into soul?



Universal Laws

I've never met
a loyal person-
but I know if
you drop a dime
off the Empire State Building
it always falls down.
I've watched flesh disintegrate
like paper-
but I know that it's not gone,
it's only changed form-
to smoke in the air,
a wave of heat,
neurons flipped to stick in memory.
I've never told the whole truth,
but I know if it rains long enough
we all drown.
I've tested all kinds of books, stories,
religions, and philosophies and what
they profess. The laws of science and
math are the only things that have
turned out to be constant and true.
So I trust that time will march
forward for me and you. One
day our species will be extinct.
All these words we speak and think
will long since have returned to the
swirling energy pool. Even so,
I love you.



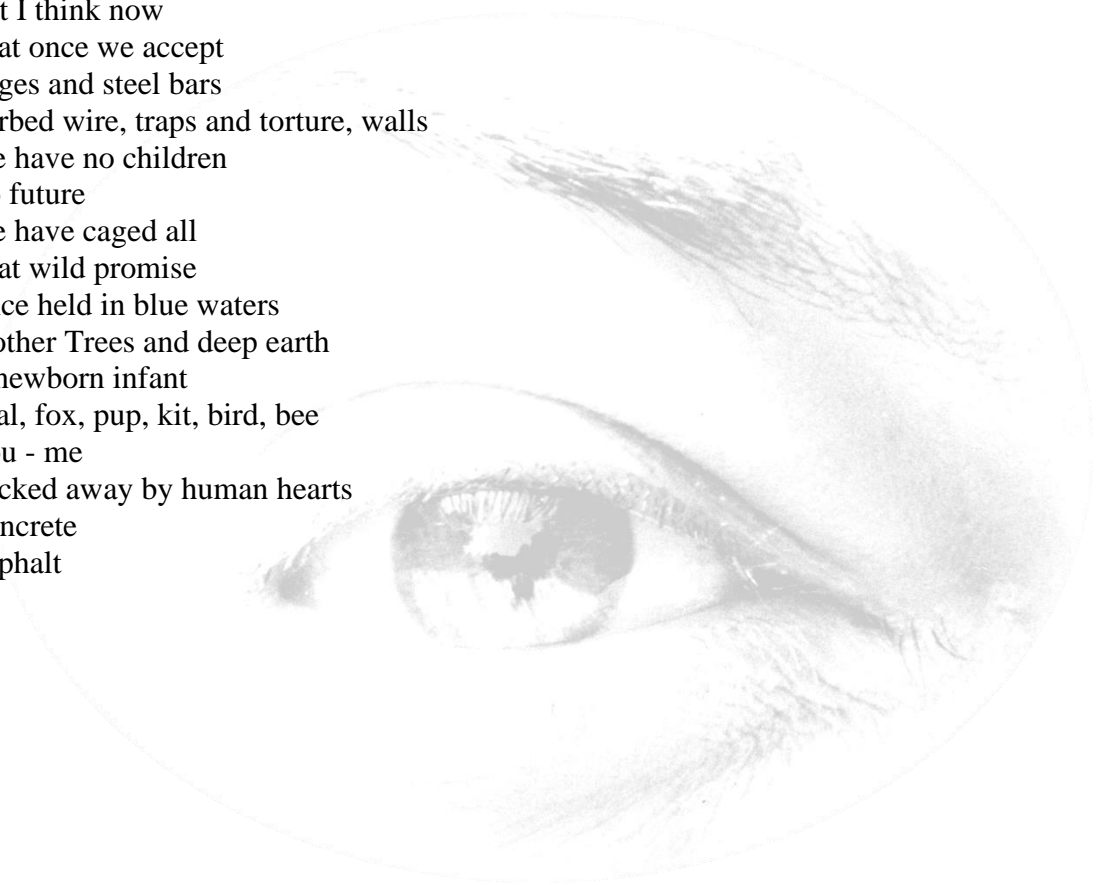
Maureen Teresa McCarthy 1 poem

Never

After daily news

Cages were for chickens
And sad creatures
Shackled in zoos
Not children

Or so I thought
But I think now
That once we accept
Cages and steel bars
Barbed wire, traps and torture, walls
We have no children
No future
We have caged all
That wild promise
Once held in blue waters
Mother Trees and deep earth
A newborn infant
Foal, fox, pup, kit, bird, bee
You - me
Locked away by human hearts
Concrete
Asphalt



Joan McNeerney 1 poem

Forgotten Landscape

I am driving down a hill without name
on an unnumbered highway.
This road transforms into a snake
winding around hair pin turns.

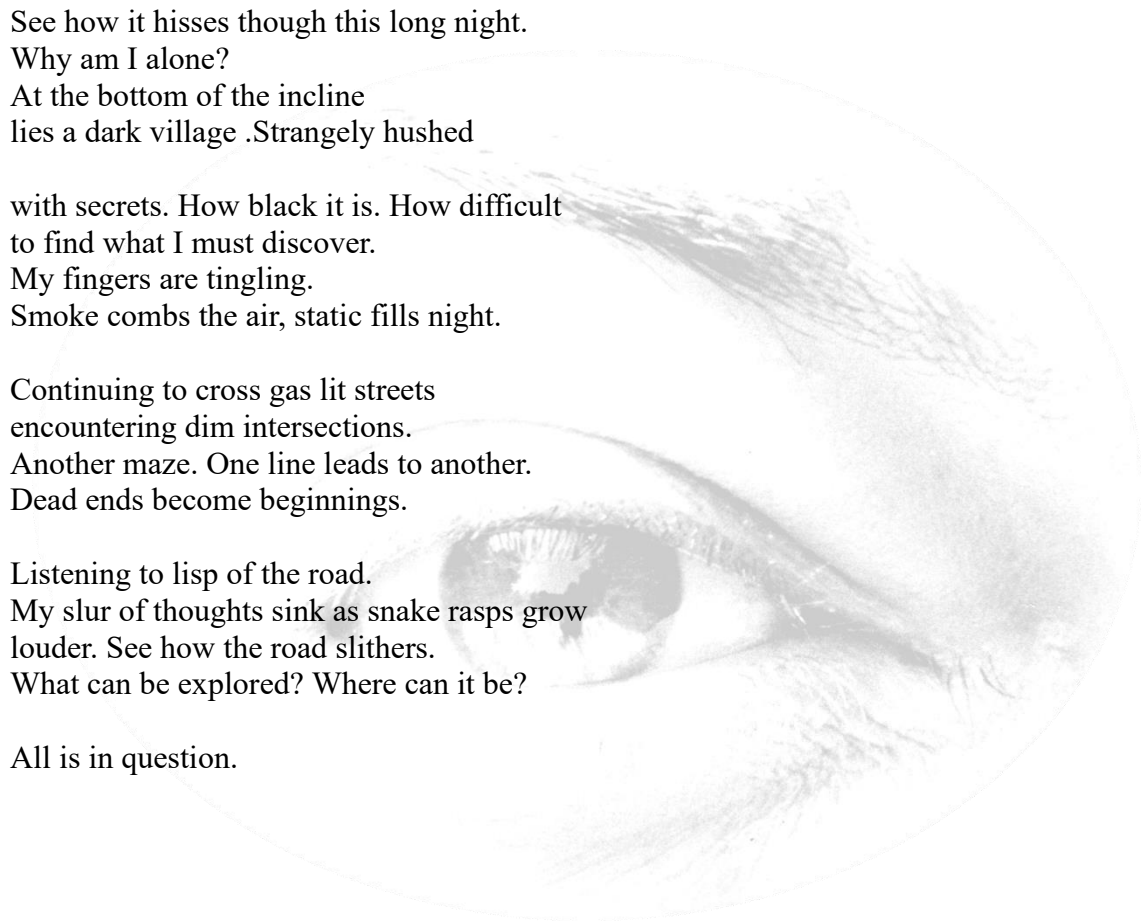
See how it hisses though this long night.
Why am I alone?
At the bottom of the incline
lies a dark village .Strangely hushed

with secrets. How black it is. How difficult
to find what I must discover.
My fingers are tingling.
Smoke combs the air, static fills night.

Continuing to cross gas lit streets
encountering dim intersections.
Another maze. One line leads to another.
Dead ends become beginnings.

Listening to lisp of the road.
My slur of thoughts sink as snake rasps grow
louder. See how the road slithers.
What can be explored? Where can it be?

All is in question.



Martina Gallegos 1 poem

Hope

A magenta/chested hummingbird brings me hope
that my day will be better. A monarch
butterfly in the middle of November tells me

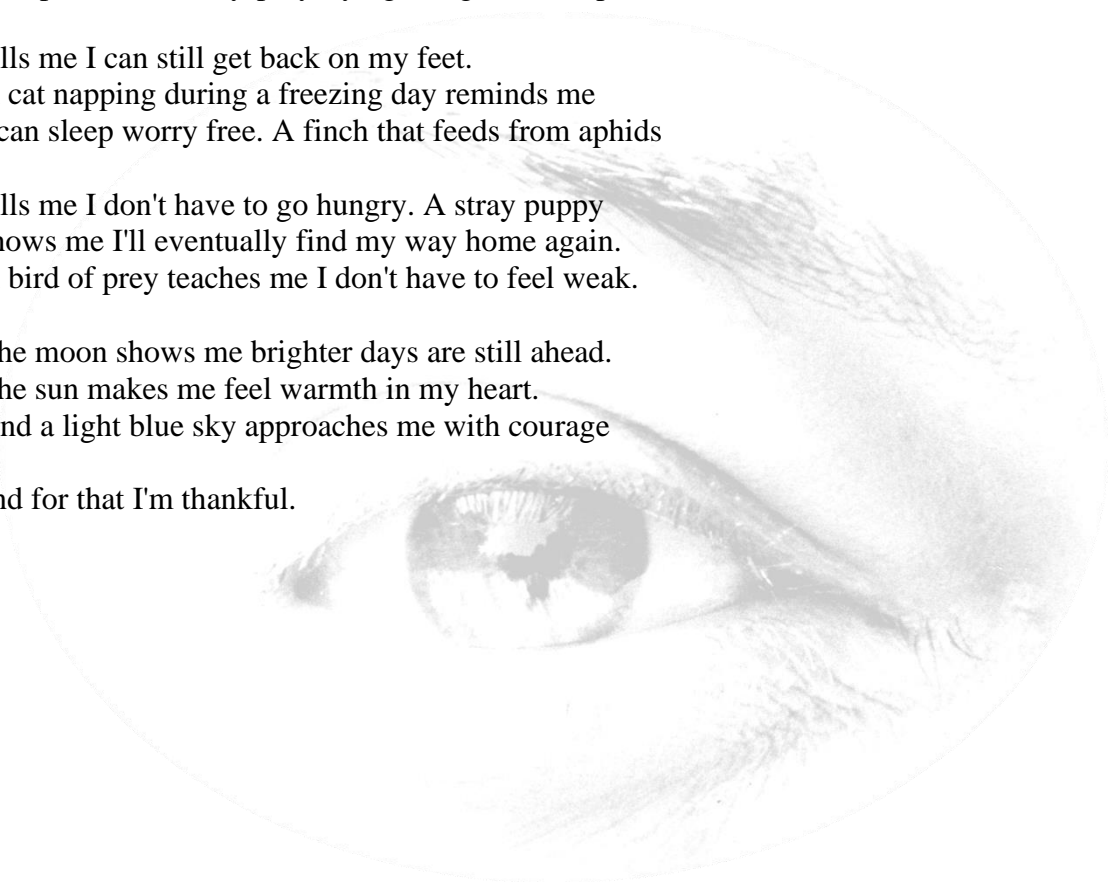
I can still thrive. And a bee trying to stay afloat
in a mud puddle motivates me to hang on.
An upside down roly-poly trying to right itself up

tells me I can still get back on my feet.
A cat napping during a freezing day reminds me
I can sleep worry free. A finch that feeds from aphids

tells me I don't have to go hungry. A stray puppy
shows me I'll eventually find my way home again.
A bird of prey teaches me I don't have to feel weak.

The moon shows me brighter days are still ahead.
The sun makes me feel warmth in my heart.
And a light blue sky approaches me with courage

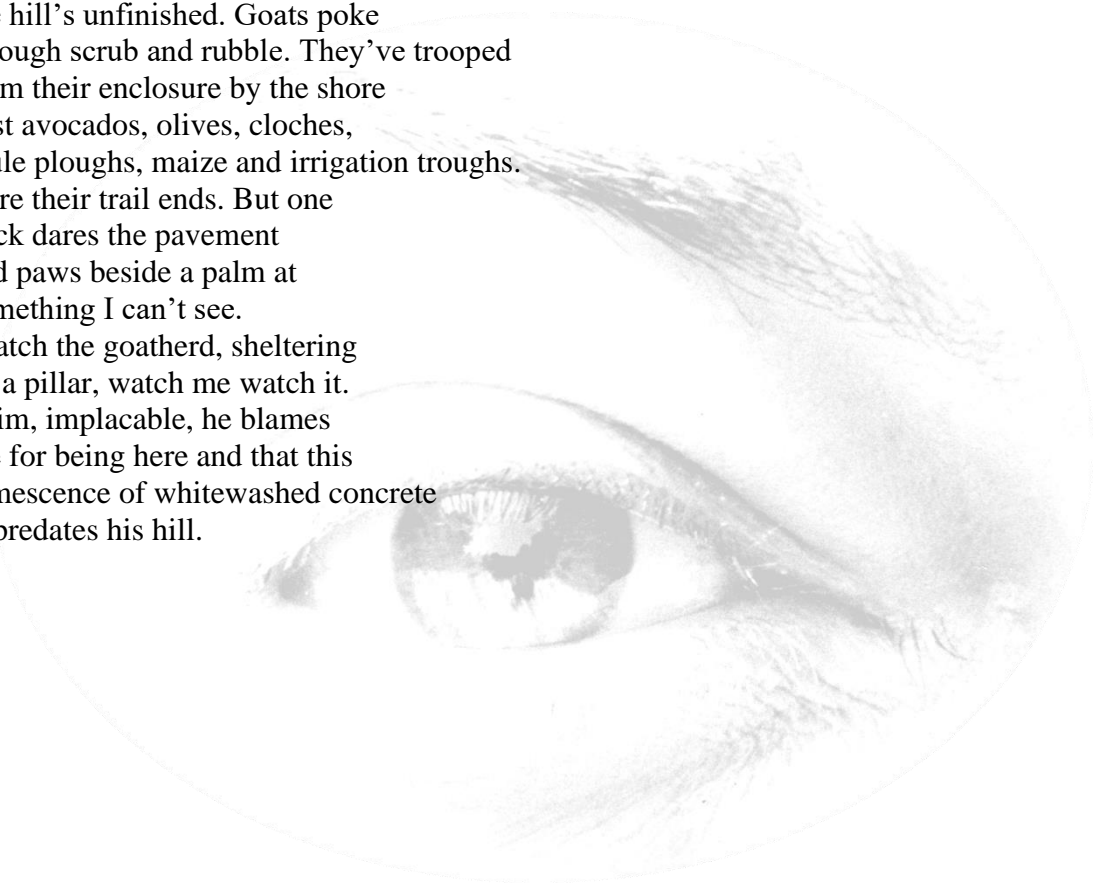
and for that I'm thankful.



Daniel P. Stokes 1 poem

Trail End

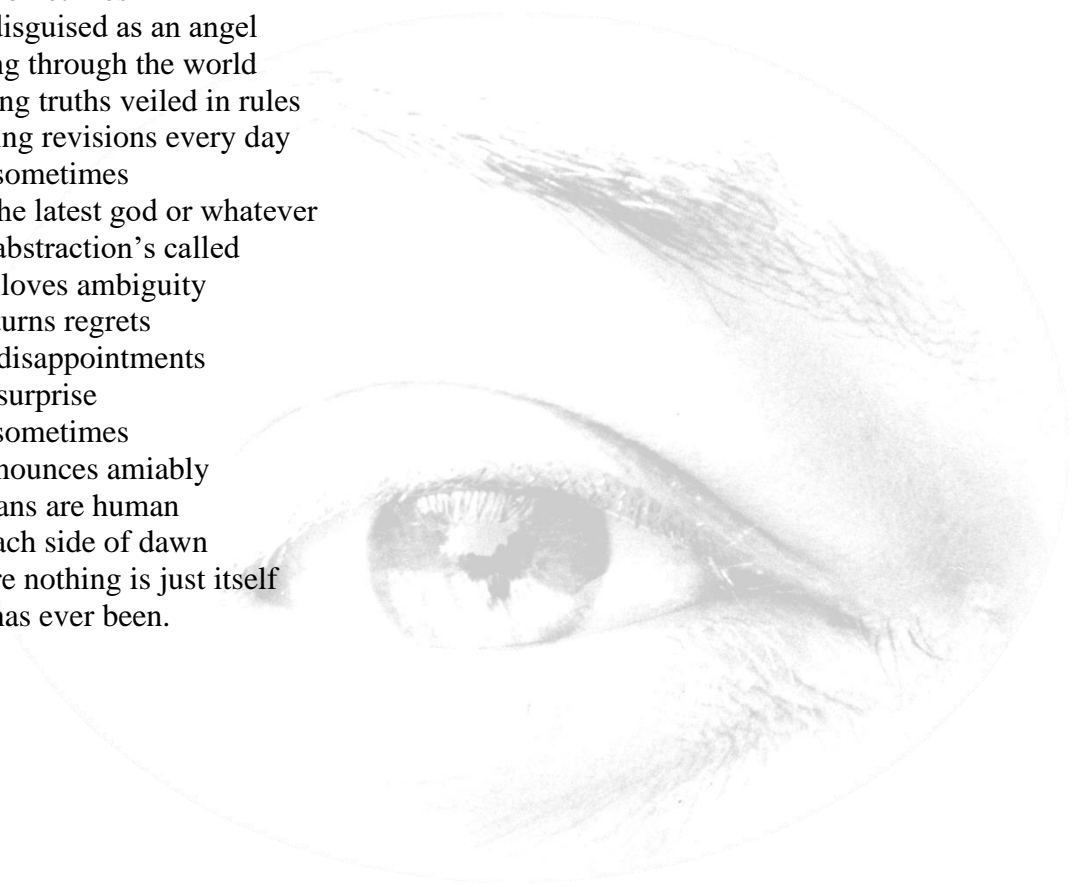
This morning nothing shimmers.
Sharp clean light ablutes my musty brain.
I stroll a quarter mile at Spanish pace
for bottled water. Below the shop
they built on site to serve
La Norria's two-week tourists,
the hill's unfinished. Goats poke
through scrub and rubble. They've trooped
from their enclosure by the shore
past avocados, olives, cloches,
mule ploughs, maize and irrigation troughs.
Here their trail ends. But one
buck dares the pavement
and paws beside a palm at
something I can't see.
I catch the goatherd, sheltering
by a pillar, watch me watch it.
Grim, implacable, he blames
me for being here and that this
tumescence of whitewashed concrete
depredates his hill.



Carolyn Martin 2 poems

Sometimes Grace

arrives like sun leaking
through arrogant evening clouds
or like a breeze rustling
full-bodied iris leaves
or like embers whirling
around a muttering fireplace
and sometimes
it's disguised as an angel
sifting through the world
finding truths veiled in rules
craving revisions every day
and sometimes
it's the latest god or whatever
this abstraction's called
who loves ambiguity
and turns regrets
into disappointments
into surprise
and sometimes
it announces amiably
humans are human
on each side of dawn
where nothing is just itself
nor has ever been.



Twenty Working Titles with Epigraphs That May—or Not—Inspire a Book

What I Failed to Ask My Mother Before She Died

-The past lies in ashes.

Forgiveness

-Let go of hoping for a better past. Remember the future.

Grief

-What is love's other name?

Extravagant Secrecy

-Leaves camouflage white crab spiders spying on naïve bumblebees.

Pure Presence

-The grace of feral cats stalking annoying squirrels.

Crabbing on Barnegat Bay with My Polish Aunts

-Never praise the day until sunset (Polish proverb).

Recycling

-A robin's grounded nest: death or flight?

Subtle Angels Rustle Iris Leaves

-June cannot be trusted.

Theatrics

- Play the Queen though you were born to play the Pawn.

Karma

-It is easier to love a thousand people in your mind than one person in your home.

“Lost” and “Free”

-Two sides, same coin?

If I Were the Creator

-Stars I held last rites for billions of years ago will rise for you tonight.

It Goes with Saying

-No matter what I do, I still look the same.

Perspective

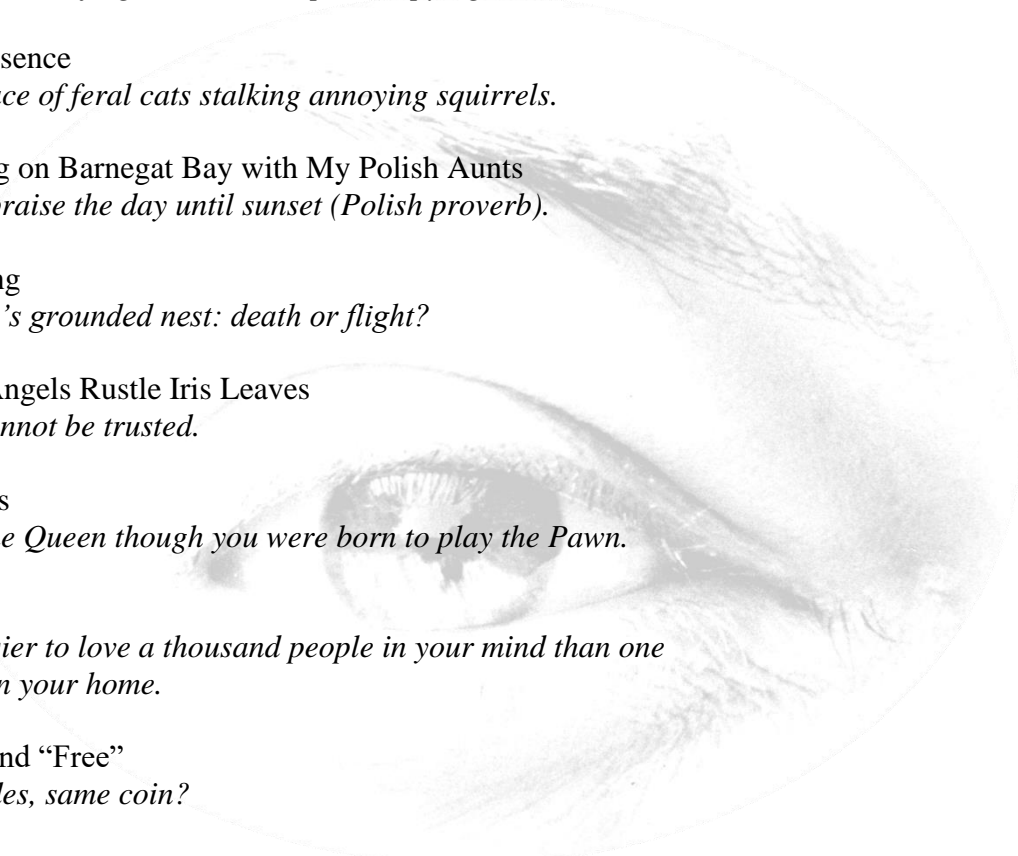
-I don't care who's right as long as someone is.

When in Doubt, Punt

-Lazy is as lazy does.

Warning

-Don't get lost in a crowd of virtues.



With All Due Respect
-I understand my responsibility.

Let This Be True
-Joy is serious business.

Composition
-The universe is made of stories not specks of atomic dust.

Do Not Read This Poem
-No one has the last word...ever.



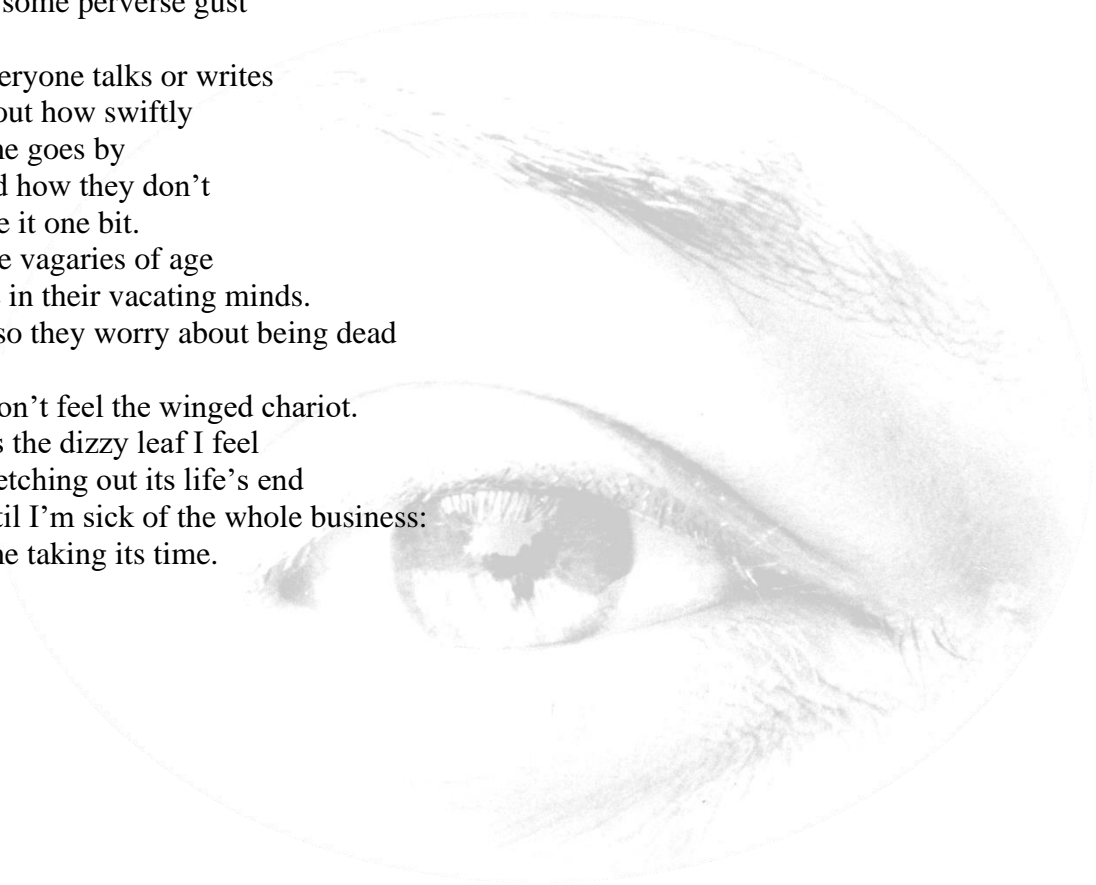
Alec Solomita 1 poem

Age

It's a little like the slow
drift of a freed yellow leaf
wavering back and forth
on a devious breeze
even lifting upward
now and then
by some perverse gust

Everyone talks or writes
about how swiftly
time goes by
and how they don't
like it one bit.
The vagaries of age
are in their vacating minds.
Also they worry about being dead

I don't feel the winged chariot.
It's the dizzy leaf I feel
stretching out its life's end
until I'm sick of the whole business:
time taking its time.



Joanne Corey 1 poem

The Bridge

based on *The Water Lily Pond* by Claude Monet. 1899

A poster of “The Water Lily Pond” has hung
above our bed for years with text

“The Metropolitan Museum of Art Exhibition - 1978”
when we were both teenagers

unable to travel to New York City,
though we could recall our younger

selves viewing other Monets on school trips
to The Clark in posh Williamstown, the colors more

alive on canvas than on poster paper
under taut plastic. Over forty years, that willow

has wept with us, that empty bridge offered a way
across, despite everything, those flowers still afloat.

Claude Monet, *The Japanese Footbridge and the Water Lily Pool, Giverny* (1899)



Scott Norman Rosenthal 1 poem

“Verses in Chinese Style”

(for our friends
at the Poetry Festival, Fall, 1990)

1.

The struggling we do
is History;...
the song we sing...History.

Look!...after the bombs...
Rain!

2.

The Walls we build
seem immobile, eternal...

the Land, the Sky,
will swallow them...

What strange Fruit blossoms
in Time...

3.

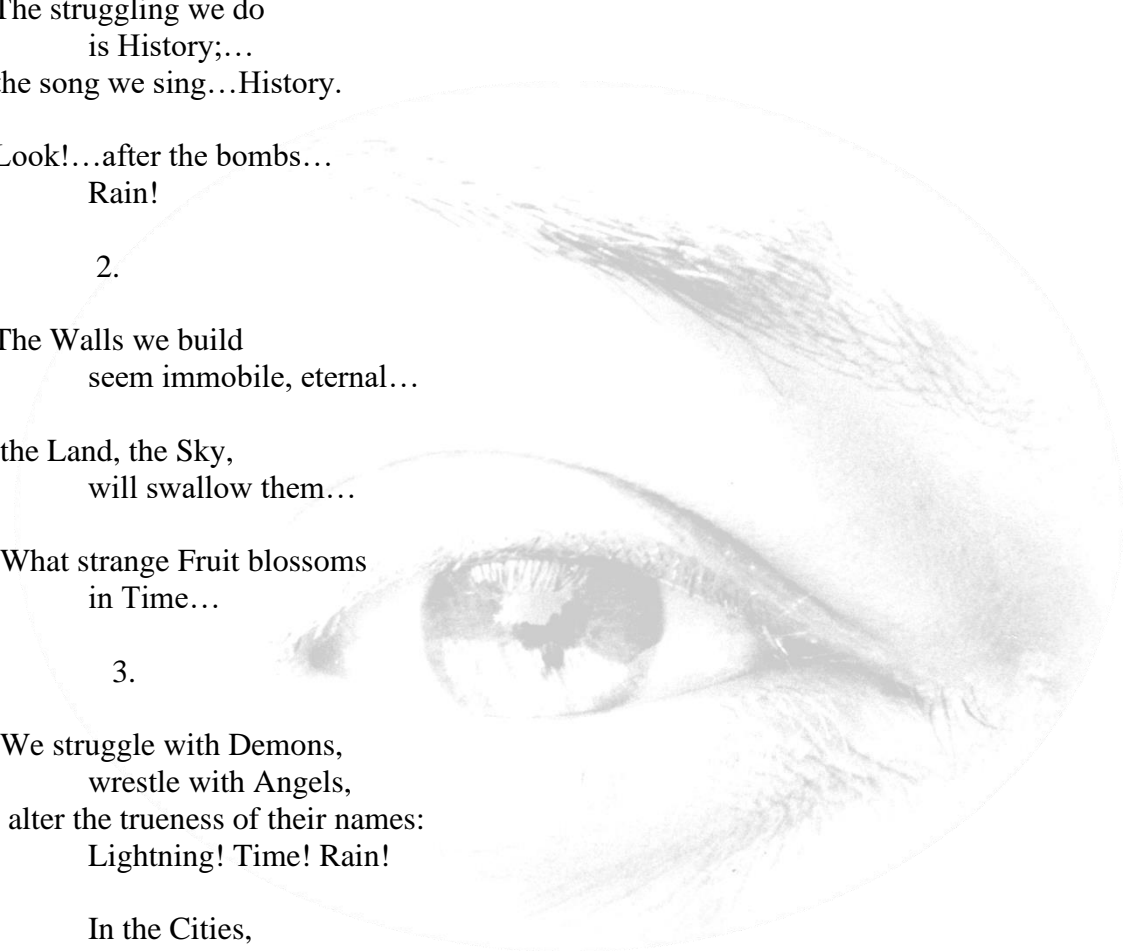
We struggle with Demons,
wrestle with Angels,
alter the trueness of their names:
Lightning! Time! Rain!

In the Cities,
Luciferian chanting...

4.

Somewhere, long-horned Antelope
will run up from the Sea,
graze the Streets of Seaport Towns...
Hard Mist is everywhere...

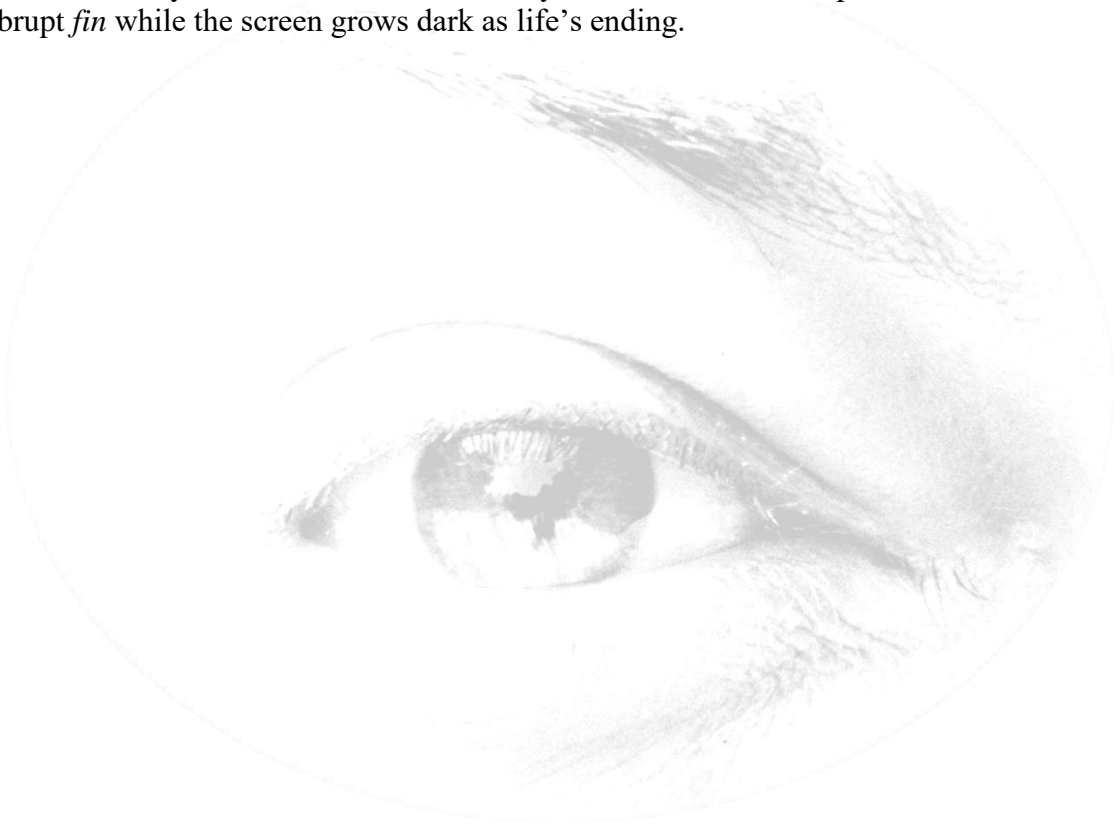
Let us spin Wheels over Prairies,
into Mountains,
You and I...



Adrian S. Potter 2 poems

Epilogue

After you age into a scratched record. After you quash the eternal insurrection in your throat. After patience wears away like a blister on your hands. After your vigor fades like old pamphlets on bulletin boards. After dreams get abandoned like dead birds in the gutters of tract homes. After you drown in the river of other people's expectations, silently. After your light has shined long after it wanes like a dying star. After you learn how to forgive, but don't. After the ghosts of your confidence drift at night, beheaded and aimless. After you evolve into the finale of your narrative, an unexpected conclusion, an abrupt *fin* while the screen grows dark as life's ending.



Speak So Well

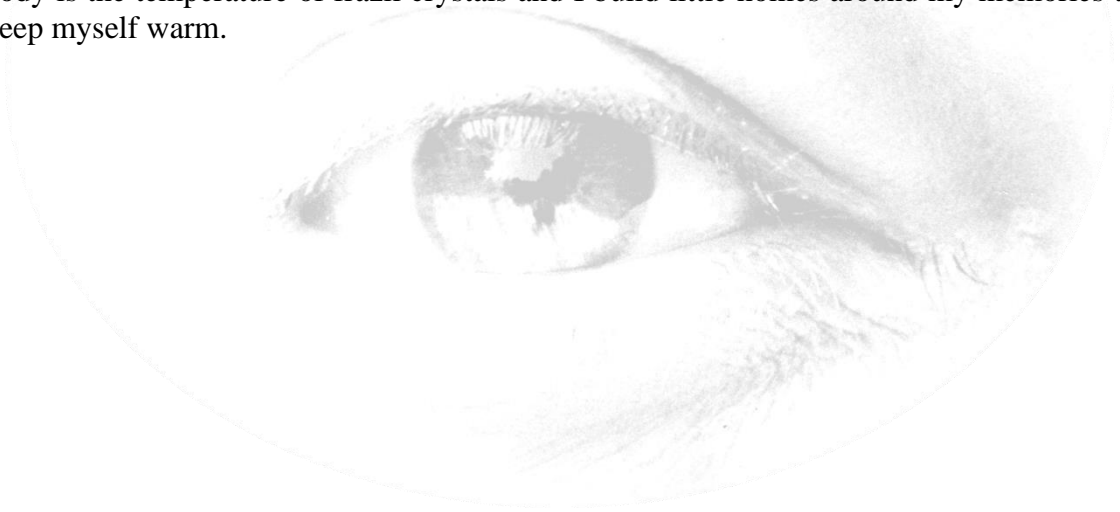
People say you speak so well. Every phrase numbly enunciated to hide traces of pain. Diction scrubbed clean of the struggle with rags and spray bottles of the strongest disinfectant linguistic camouflaging can buy. All day your words hold value if spoken with your milk voice. All day they rub against frustration, daring friction to kindle flames. When you speak so well, you can become an exception to typecasting, sometimes. Like language is a suit you hang in your closet every evening and take out each morning. Eventually, flat dialogue floats towards deaf ears just because, because in the end, you don't belong, and there's no guaranteed way to be heard, to know for sure they listen, to feel respected as your syllables get whitewashed with a smile.



Sam Moe 2 poems

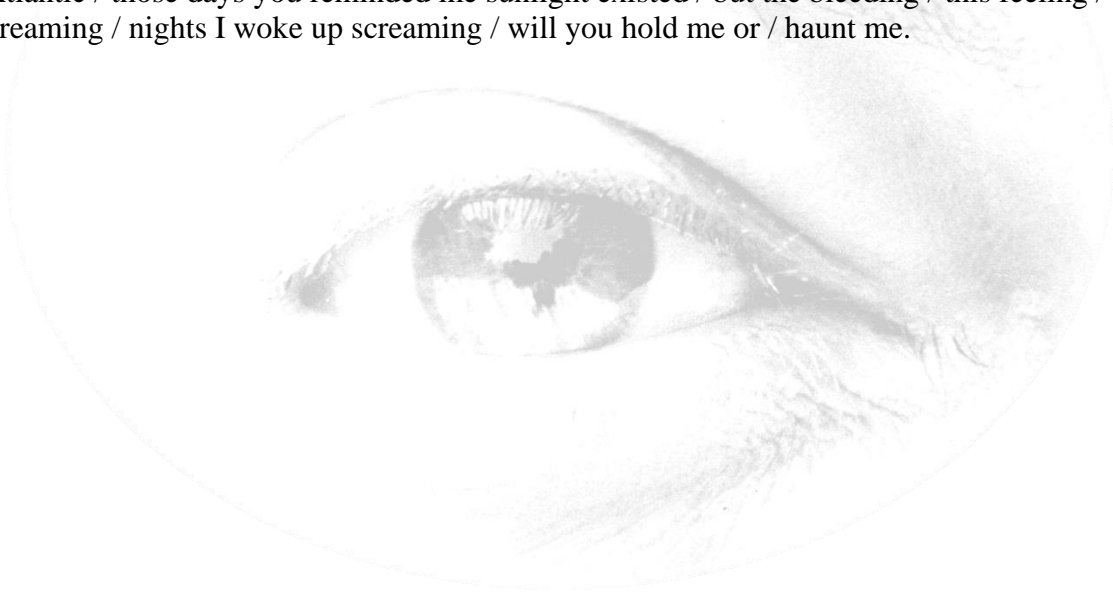
What to do

With the empty heart at the party, who would have thought things would be any different, devouring unnamable drinks in the foyer, golden peach lamps and flaking foil, pieces of fruit peel curling into letters, reminding me of your name, reminding me of the open-mouthed way I wish I could say *love* or *devour*, instead I'm sorry, I've eaten what was left of my humanity, I still have a story about pleading but I don't think you want to hear it, I have dozens of ghosts trailing behind me like damaged dresses, yellow hat and alone in the diner, sometimes you seem like your heart has valves and other day you're an empty case, hard outer shell of a candy, flying saucer full of rainbow gems, bad for my teeth but I'm dreaming about you anyway, sorry I was close enough to put my head in your lap, sorry I didn't leave first, I never expected the moon to rot away in the sky, never expected the hands and have you had enough of me yet, do you know I can never go back, do you know what it means to be driving in a car with someone you're not in love with, encased in rain, someone's hands are on the steering wheel, you don't recognize this feeling of safety, but it's safety, little messy heart with a hook in the center, of course the whole point is to smoke too much, to ask you to help with the shaking hands, rough terrain, this is another way I'm dressing up what really happened, which is to say my body is the temperature of frazil crystals and I build little homes around my memories to keep myself warm.



I am running out of ways to say

Oh my god / couldn't stop the river if I tried / the times we held smooth pebbles in our hands / and I knew nothing of mud or tire tracks / my heart wants to take things too far / don't want to talk about / bleeding / how do I explain this feeling / your laughter on ghost-smoke mornings / how I want to show you the iron masks / the times I wanted to kill my / freshwater crabs in small green buckets / the way my collarbone is a magnet against yours / long night / green jars / everyone is cute / the room is old-gold like an oyster / you talk about money / like it / means nothing / I can't stand too close / my breathing a loose / horse / hooves in the backyard / prints in the sand pit / the time of the bandages / sorry I was sore / sorry about sour / saw my blood / it reminded my body / of loss / of god / how I wanted to run / into your arms / when you told me you / understood wounds / and feelings / this is nightmare week / this is the year after the year I quit that shit / the day after the night of blood / do you want to know or should we crush / the ice for the drinks / I'll bring sugar I'll / bring excuses for heat / in my face / my teeth / hold back the hurting hand / from your healing gaze / it's not about screaming / ghosts woven into sheets / caramel buds / soft night / everyone is kind / should I stop wanting to / dive / into late winter water / the road leading to missing / I'd have to tell you everything / and oh how / you'd regret me / but we could be / magical four / in the morning / water glass / doves up sleeves / a feeling that is more banshee / than boy / don't want to give away sad / gums of stars / would have loved to see you tip / top-shelf liquor / brine from the Atlantic / those days you reminded me sunlight existed / but the bleeding / this feeling / of dreaming / nights I woke up screaming / will you hold me or / haunt me.



Patrick Connors 1 poem

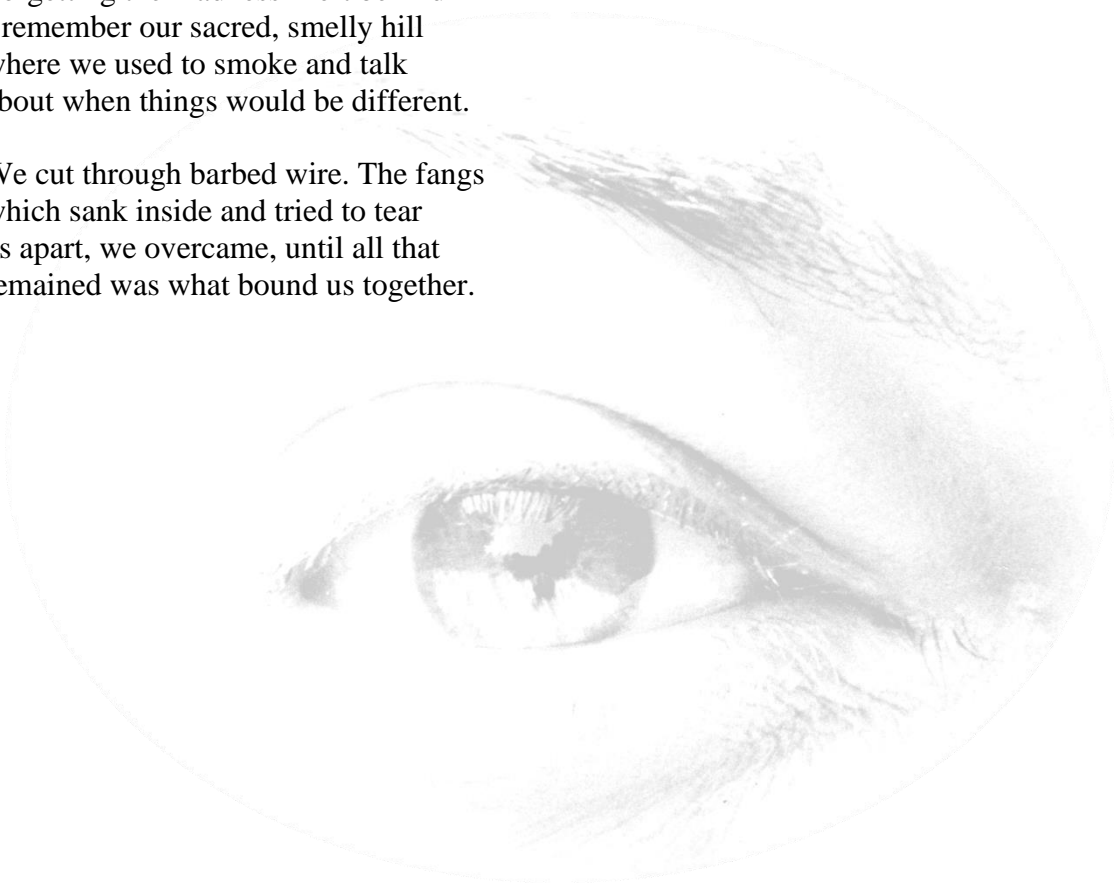
Wire

(TRHA)

My nerves are wound like piano wire
wrapped around my wrists and ankles
etched into my face and bleeding heart
while I scream into a vacuum.

Forgetting the madness I left behind
I remember our sacred, smelly hill
where we used to smoke and talk
about when things would be different.

We cut through barbed wire. The fangs
which sank inside and tried to tear
us apart, we overcame, until all that
remained was what bound us together.



Kristen Baum DeBeasi 1 poem

The Soul of the Rose, by John William Waterhouse, (British) 1908

<https://www.john-william-waterhouse.com/soul-of-the-rose/>



Soul of a Rose

In the aftermath of the kiss, the jolt,
the whatever woke her, she lives again

in a palace, but she is without
connection to place or time. The only link

to mother is borne through the scent
of roses. The prince finds her daily

at the wall, the one cascading
with Double Delights. Her face is lifted,

eyes closed, one hand resting on the wall
the way the prince imagined it, familiar,

charming on his chest, her ready lips
parted, nose buried in each bloom, open

to the scent that carries her back
to childhood before mother was gone

before stepmother schemed, before father left
to the time when roses bloomed,

where blood on snow brought rosy promises
before the knowledge of pain,

the scent of longing.

Rikki Santer 1 poem

Monet and Manet + Liebermann + Hitler

A painter paints a painter.

Another painter purchases the painting.

A failed painter mounts a genocide of biblical proportion.

A failed painter paints atrocity into acts of brutal thievery.

A postscript paints a further story:

Monet's *Manet painting in Monet's Garden* (1874) was confiscated

by the Nazis from a Berlin apartment in March 1943

along with other

belongings of Martha Liebermann

(widow of painter/collector Max)

following her suicide

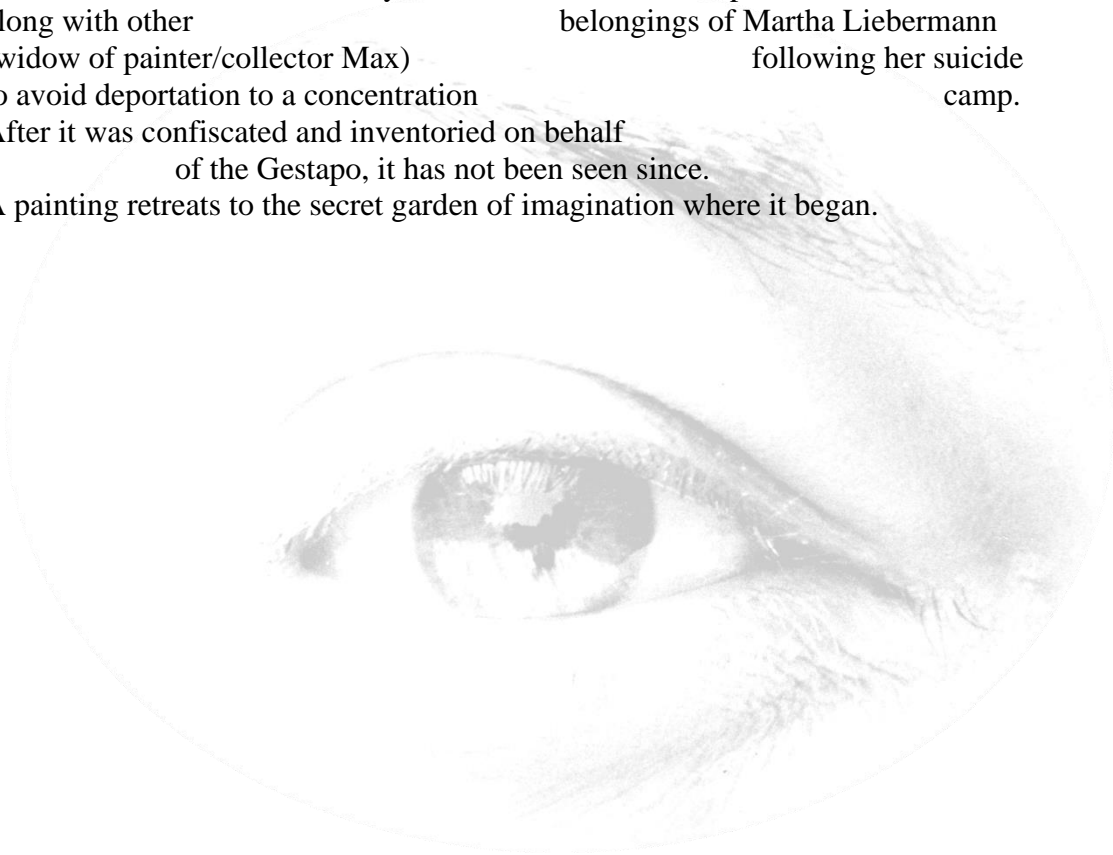
to avoid deportation to a concentration

camp.

After it was confiscated and inventoried on behalf

of the Gestapo, it has not been seen since.

A painting retreats to the secret garden of imagination where it began.

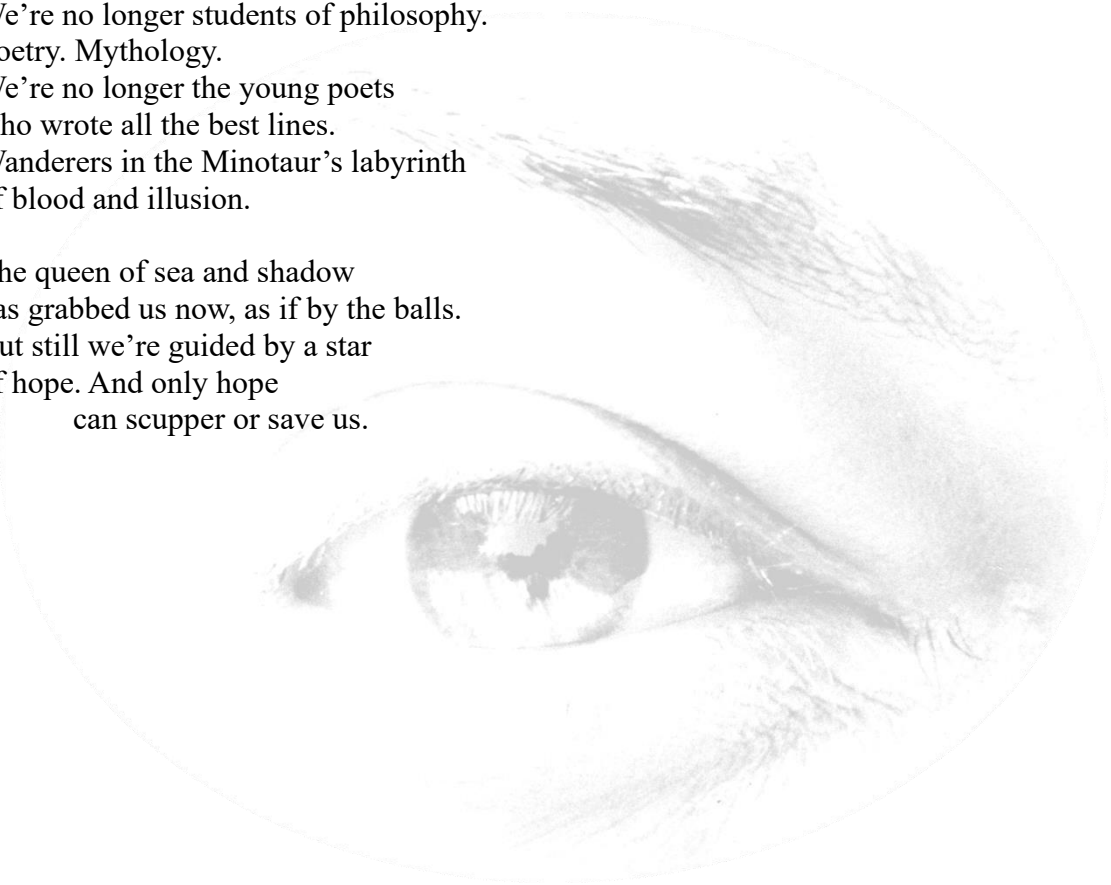


Mark A. Murphy 5 poems (from: 'Ontologistics Of A Time Traveller')

Gaia

Perhaps we returned to you too late.
Green and lovely mother.
Unchanging mother,
buried in the oceans of the past.
Up to your neck in the slops and spoils
of enlightenment.
We're no longer students of philosophy.
Poetry. Mythology.
We're no longer the young poets
who wrote all the best lines.
Wanderers in the Minotaur's labyrinth
of blood and illusion.

The queen of sea and shadow
has grabbed us now, as if by the balls.
But still we're guided by a star
of hope. And only hope
can scupper or save us.



Land of Serendipity & *X-press Pearl*

*...I saw there were no oceans left
for scavengers like me...*

Leonard Cohen

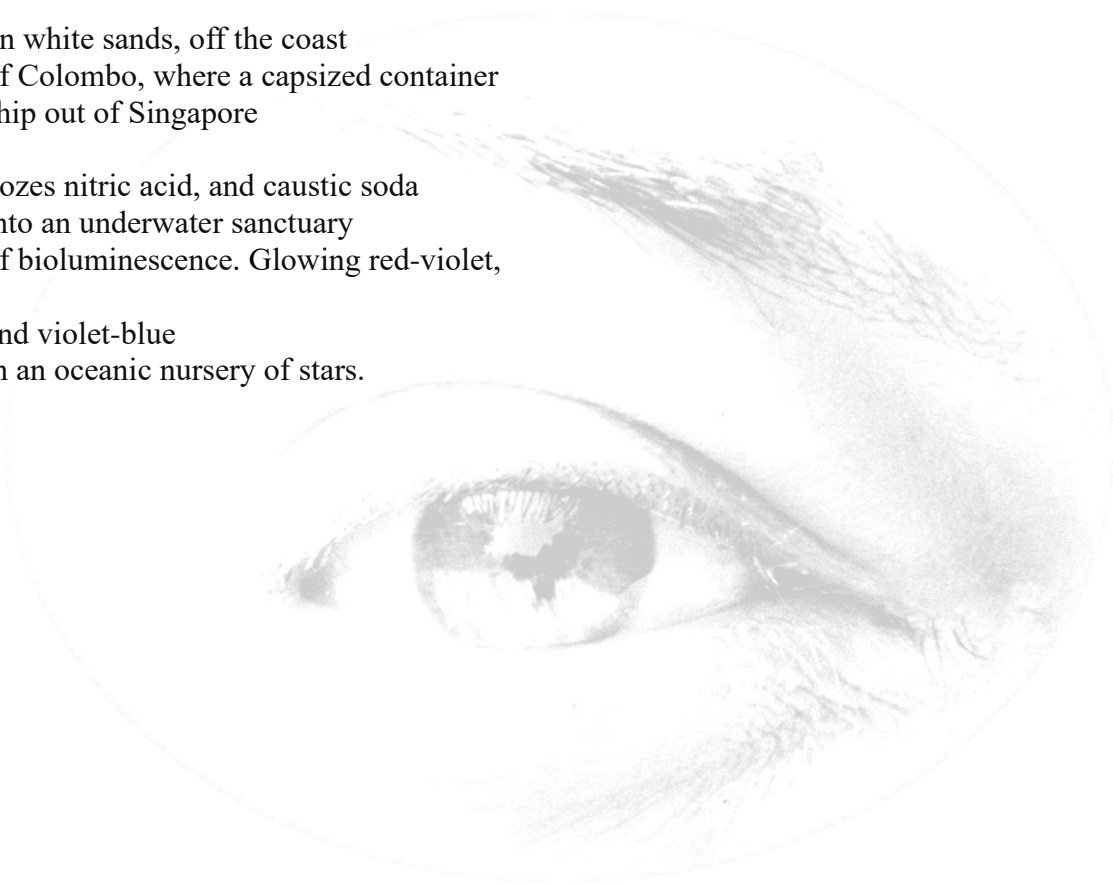
A new dawn breaks over wave and tide
and with it, a new discovery
for the Pearl of the Indian Ocean

where fishermen are always fated
to wake up first. Dreaming
of catches and carcasses. Gulls, terns,
and frigates. Now washing up

on white sands, off the coast
of Colombo, where a capsized container
ship out of Singapore

oozes nitric acid, and caustic soda
into an underwater sanctuary
of bioluminescence. Glowing red-violet,

and violet-blue
in an oceanic nursery of stars.



Dead Art of Poetry

for Getesaro

i

Not a poet but a man
who speaks conscientiously of poets.
Never mouthing his own tastes
as if to elide
hierarchies of opinion.

Now the impulse of poetry shifts
in his veins—
effecting consolation.
Bringing that which has passed away
back into today's poem.

And though, always unfinished
in stories of the river man, he seeks unity
in wind and reed
like a man transformed
by the clairvoyance of the ear.

ii

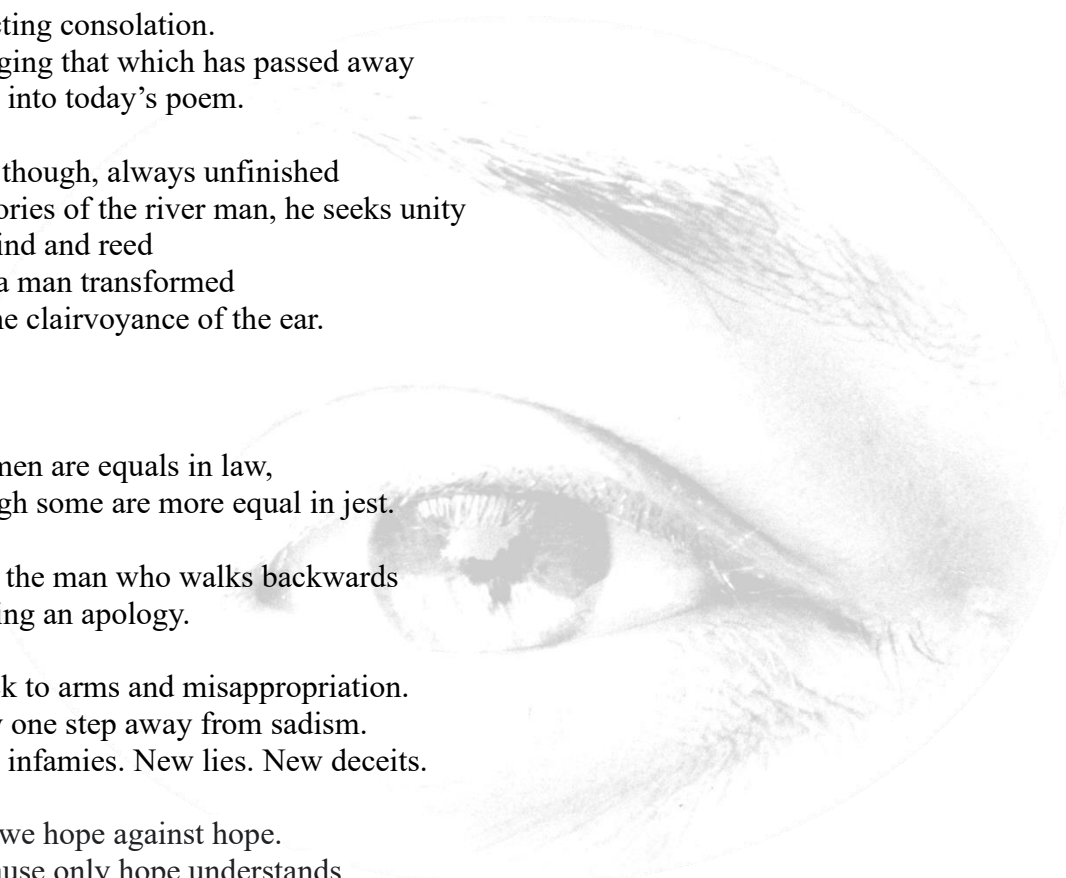
All men are equals in law,
though some are more equal in jest.

Like the man who walks backwards
making an apology.

Quick to arms and misappropriation.
Only one step away from sadism.
New infamies. New lies. New deceptions.

Yet, we hope against hope.
Because only hope understands
and completes the past.
Only hope binds us to the present moment.

Om Mani Padme Hum
Om Mani Padme Hum



Splitting Apples

Art is magic delivered from the lie of being truth.

Theodor W. Adorno

If the invariants, whose very invariance
is evinced by philosophy, how do we peel

the humble apple. If authorship
of the truth is invariable, does it follow

that all variables are invariably the same.
Is the perfect apple round or wonky.

Is it safe to say, pips in their turn, will
always produce the perfect apple.

Is it set in stone. Sweet or sour. Soft or hard
on the teeth. Is measurability the true

measure of the apple. Does quantity
presuppose quality. Who recalls tasting

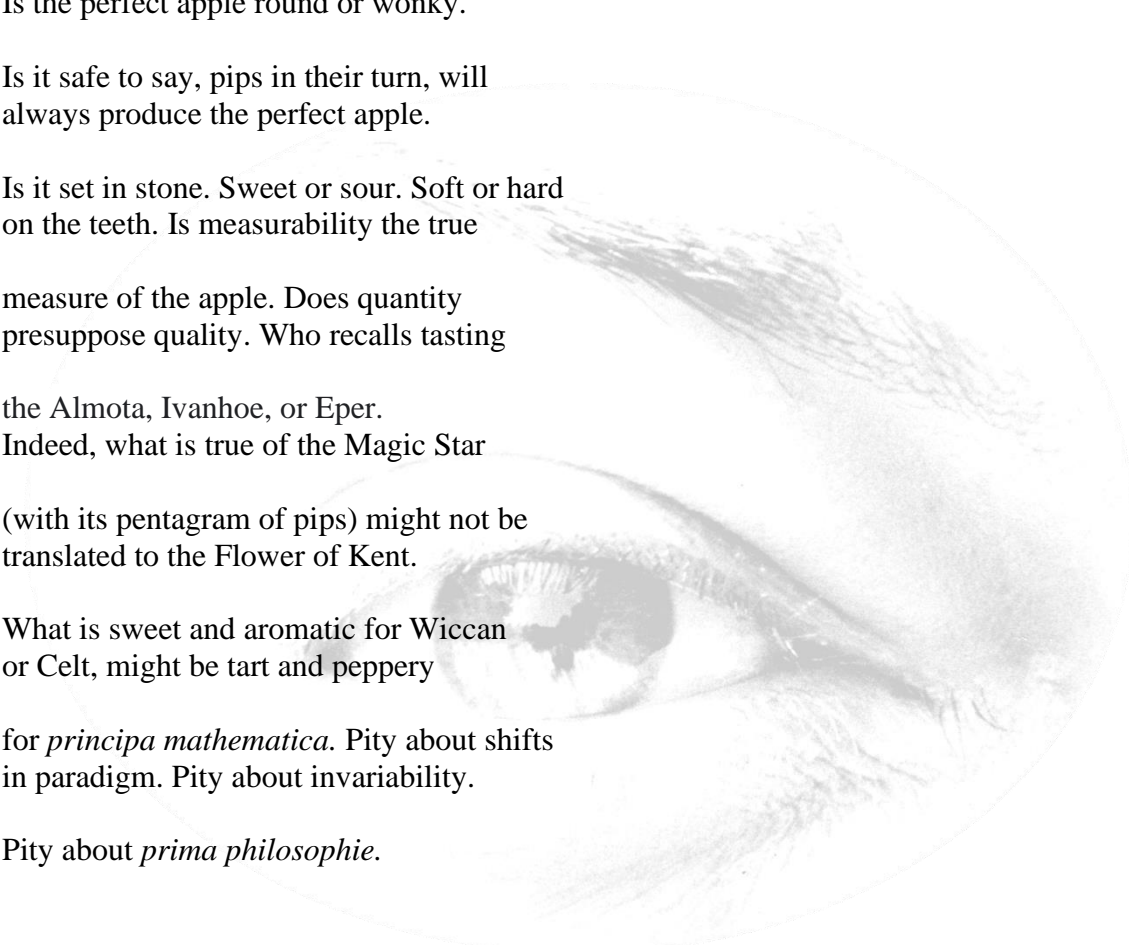
the Almota, Ivanhoe, or Eper.
Indeed, what is true of the Magic Star

(with its pentagram of pips) might not be
translated to the Flower of Kent.

What is sweet and aromatic for Wiccan
or Celt, might be tart and peppery

for *principa mathematica*. Pity about shifts
in paradigm. Pity about invariability.

Pity about *prima philosophie*.



Dead Art of Poetry (Peroration)

i

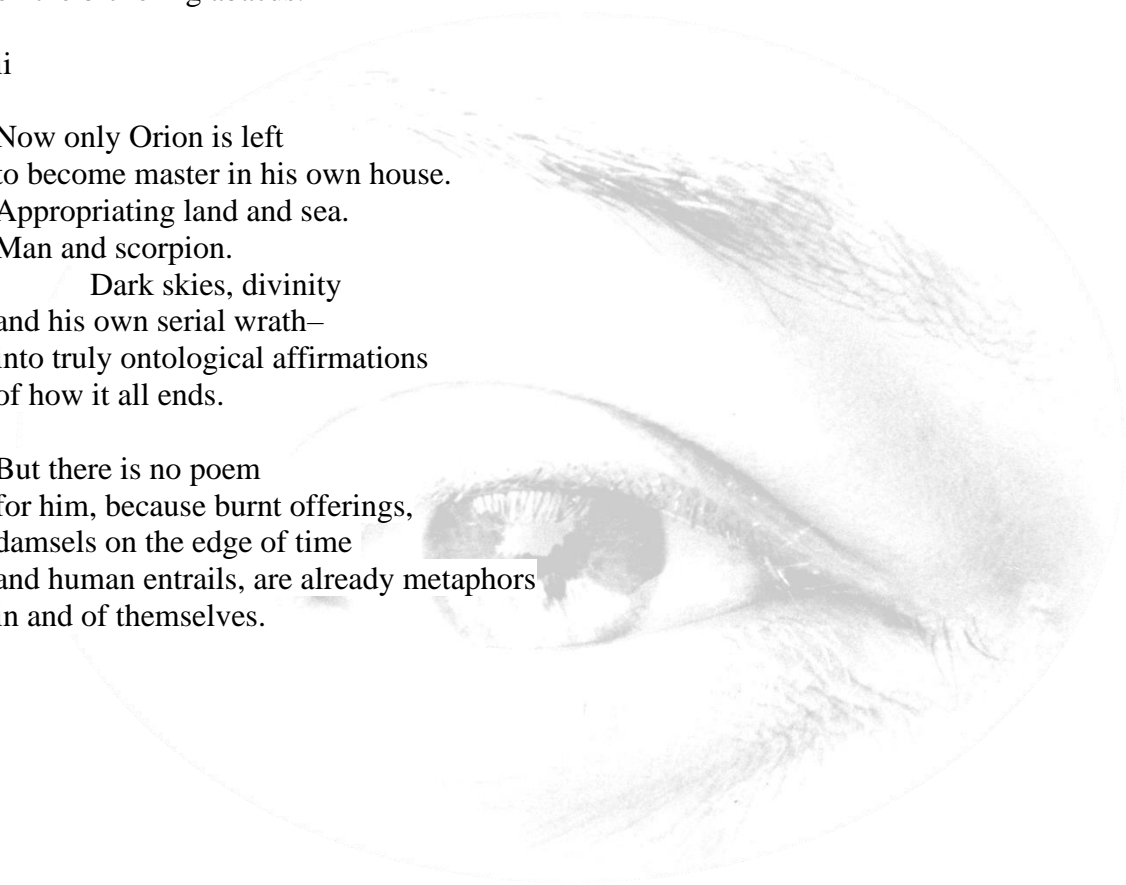
We give you Mother Nature
weeping in the dark,
disputing the finer points
of poetry, as if to dispel the myths
of human misery.
But there is no poem for her
because the stars have all gone out,
as if to commiserate
and count— aeons and alliteration
on the bickering abacus.

ii

Now only Orion is left
to become master in his own house.
Appropriating land and sea.
Man and scorpion.

Dark skies, divinity
and his own serial wrath—
into truly ontological affirmations
of how it all ends.

But there is no poem
for him, because burnt offerings,
damsels on the edge of time
and human entrails, are already metaphors
in and of themselves.



Contributors Notes

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her poetry is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality.

<https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>

Marial Awendit a.k.a. James Marial Matueny Majak, is a South Sudanese poet, essayist and songwriter. He is published in various literary magazines and anthologies.

He is the author of the chapbook poetry collection, *The Night Does Not Drown Us*, published by Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation, *Keeping the Sun Secret*, a poetry collection published by Mwanaka Media and Publishing Pvt Ltd and *Whispers over a Brewing Dawn*, published by Carnelian Heart Publishing Ltd.

Marial won the **2016 South Sudan Youth Talent Award** for the category of **Best Poet** and the **2018 Babishai-Niwe Poetry Award**. He is a finalist for **2023 African Writers Awards**.

Cathy Thwing

Douglas Colston hails from Australia, has played in Ska bands and picked up university degrees, supported his parents during terminal illnesses, developed mental and physical disabilities, married his love, fathered two great children, had his inheritance embezzled and among other things, he is pursuing a PhD he hopes will provide a positive contribution to the zeitgeist. His fiction, nonfiction and poetry has appeared in various anthologies and magazines, including: *POETiCA REViEW*; *Tenth Muse*; *Hive Avenue*; *Rue Scribe*; *Inlandia*; and *Revue {R}évolution*.

Jerrice J. Baptiste is a poet and author of eight books. Her poems are published and forthcoming in *Urthona: Buddhism & Art*, *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality & The Arts*, *Mantis*, *The Yale Review*, *Impspired*, *The Poetry Distillery*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Kosmos Journal*, *The Dewdrop* and others. Her poetry and collaborative song writing are featured on the Grammy nominated award album: *Many Hands Family Music for Haiti*.

Stephen Rufus' work has appeared in the *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *3rd Wednesday*, the *American Journal of Poetry*, *The Shore*, *Poetica Review*, *JMWW*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, and *Stone Poetry Quarterly*, among others. He has a piece in a forthcoming issue of the *I-70 Review*. I was a semifinalist for the 2022 Morgenthau Prize sponsored by Passenger Books, and has had two poems nominated for a Pushcart. He was a founding poetry editor of *Quarterly West* and twice a recipient of a Utah Original Writing Competition Award. He has lived in Colorado, California, and Utah where he studied writing at major universities and held fellowships and teaching positions, but he is originally from New York City and still considers himself a New Yorker in many respects. He currently resides in Salt Lake City with his wife.

Trish Hopkinson is a poet and advocate for the literary arts. You can find her online at SelfishPoet.com and in western Colorado where she runs the regional poetry group Rock Canyon Poets and is a board member of the International Women's Writing Guild. Her poetry has been published in *Sugar House Review*, *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, and *The Penn Review*; and her most recent book *A Godless Ascends* is forthcoming from Lithic Press in March 2024. Hopkinson happily answers to labels such as atheist, feminist, and empty nester; and enjoys traveling, live music, and craft beer.

Sinead Mcguigan, a poet and psychology graduate from University College Dublin Ireland writes poetry that explores the human condition and the deepest emotions connected to experience. Sinead wrote her first solo collection *A Gift and a Curse* while recovering from cancer; her new book *Unbound*, in the aftermath. Both books are available on Amazon. Sinead's main interests are travel concerts and art. She often collaborates with artists and has appeared alongside their work in many publications. Recently Sinead's second book was added to the American library network. You can read more of her poetry on Instagram/ Facebook@[sineadmcpoetry](#).

K. Dulai works in nonprofit. She is currently an Emerging Arts Professionals Fellow in San Francisco. Her work has appeared in *trampset*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *Pretty Owl Poetry*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Eastern Iowa Review*, and other publications. She is a 2022/2023 Vona Alum. She can be found on Twitter and IG as @kjdulai

Scott Dalgarno counts himself fortunate to have seen poems of his in *APR*, *The Yale Review*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Pilgrimage*, *America*, *Cagibi*, *The Oregonian*, and other journals.

He lives near Portland, Oregon.

Maril Crabtree's book *Fireflies in the Gathering Dark* received the 2018 Kansas Notable Books award. Her work has appeared in numerous journals including *Kalliope*, *Earth's Daughters*, *I-70 Review*, *The DMQ Review*, *Coal City Review*, *Main Street Rag*, and *I-70 Review*. She served as poetry editor for *Kansas City Voices* and as contributing editor for *Heartland! Poems of Love, Resistance & Solidarity*.

Angie Ebba is a Portland, OR based poet. She's had work published in *HNDL*, *Ink and Marrow*, *Portland Metrozine*, *Ekphrastic Review*, and others.

Faith Paulsen's work appears or is upcoming in *Scientific American*, *Poetry Breakfast*, *Milk art journal*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Book of Matches*, *One Art*, *Panoply*, *Thimble*, *Evansville Review* and *Mantis*. The author of three chapbooks and mother of three sons, her day job is in insurance.

<https://www.faithpaulsenpoet.com/>

A reluctant carbon-based life-form, **Duane Herrmann** was surprised to find himself on a farm in Kansas. He's trying to make sense of that, but has grown fond of grass waving under wind, trees and the enchantment of moonlight. He aspires to be a hermit, but would miss his children, grandchildren and a few friends. His work has been published in print and online. He has carried baby kittens in his mouth, pet snakes, and has conversations with owls, but is careful not to anger them! All this, and degrees in education and history, despite a traumatic, abusive childhood embellished with dyslexia, ADHD (both unknown when a child), cyclothymia, situational Mutism, an anxiety disorder and, now, PTSD. Everything is difficult.

Jimmy Pappas won the Rattle Chapbook Prize for *Falling off the Empire State Building*, the Rattle Readers Choice Award for "Bobby's Story," and was nominated by Rattle for a

Pushcart Prize for "The Gray Man." He has been published in over 100 journals. He is the moderator of weekly Zoom events called A Conversation with Jimmy and Friends. He can be reached at Goodreads.

Cynthia Gallaher, a Chicago-based poet, is author of four poetry collections, including *Epicurean Ecstasy: More Poems About Food, Drink, Herbs and Spices*, and three chapbooks, including *Drenched*. Her award-winning nonfiction/memoir/creativity guide is *Frugal Poets' Guide to Life: How to Live a Poetic Life, Even If You Aren't a Poet*. One of her poems will be sent on NASA's flight to the south pole of the moon later this decade. Gallaher also has a degree in the History of Art and Architecture.

Terez Peipins is a writer of Latvian descent from Western New York. Her poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in publications both in the United States and abroad. She is the author of four chapbooks of poetry and four novels. Her latest novel, *River Clues* is the second book in the Dan Kiraly detective series. She divides her time between Buffalo, New York, and Barcelona, Spain.

Laurie Kuntz is an award-winning poet and film producer. She taught creative writing and poetry in Japan, Thailand and the Philippines. Many of her poetic themes are a result of her working with Southeast Asian refugees in refugee camps in Thailand and the Philippines for over a decade after the Vietnam War years.

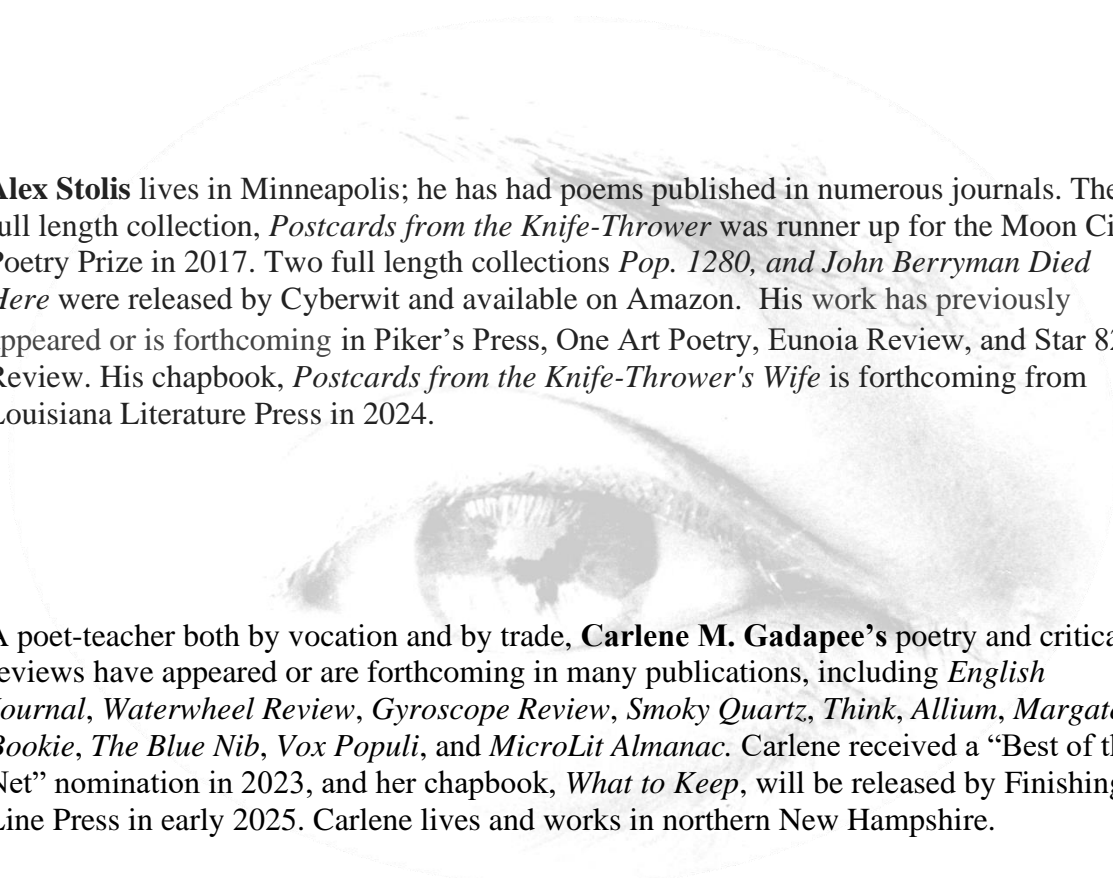
She has published six poetry collections (*That Infinite Roar*, Gyroscope Press, *Talking Me Off The Roof*, Kelsay Books, *The Moon Over My Mother's House*, Finishing Line Press, *Simple Gestures*, Texas Review Press, *Women at the Onsen*, Blue Light Press and *Somewhere in the Telling*, Mellen Press). *Simple Gestures*, won the Texas Review Poetry Chapbook Contest, and *Women at the Onsen* won the Blue Light Press Chapbook Contest. She has been nominated for three Pushcart Prizes and two Best of the Net Prizes. Retired, she lives in an endless summer state of mind. Visit her at: <https://lauriekuntz.myportfolio.com/home-1>

Hibah Shabkhez is a writer of the half-yo literary tradition, an erratic language-learning enthusiast, and a happily eccentric blogger from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in *Rougarou*, *Backstory Journal*, *Porridge Magazine*, *Boats Against The Current*, *Samjoko Magazine*, *Five Minutes*, and a number of other literary magazines.

Studying life, languages, and literature from a comparative perspective across linguistic and cultural boundaries holds a particular fascination for her.

Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/HibahShabkhez>

Catherine Arra is the author of four full-length poetry collections and four chapbooks. Her newest work is *Solitude, Tarot & the Corona Blues* (Kelsay Books, 2022) A Pushcart nominee, Arra lives in upstate New York, where she teaches part-time and facilitates local writing groups. Find her at www.catherinearra.com



Alex Stolis lives in Minneapolis; he has had poems published in numerous journals. The full length collection, *Postcards from the Knife-Thrower* was runner up for the Moon City Poetry Prize in 2017. Two full length collections *Pop. 1280*, and *John Berryman Died Here* were released by Cyberwit and available on Amazon. His work has previously appeared or is forthcoming in Piker's Press, One Art Poetry, Eunoia Review, and Star 82 Review. His chapbook, *Postcards from the Knife-Thrower's Wife* is forthcoming from Louisiana Literature Press in 2024.

A poet-teacher both by vocation and by trade, **Carlene M. Gadapee's** poetry and critical reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in many publications, including *English Journal*, *Waterwheel Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Smoky Quartz*, *Think*, *Allium*, *Margate Bookie*, *The Blue Nib*, *Vox Populi*, and *MicroLit Almanac*. Carlene received a "Best of the Net" nomination in 2023, and her chapbook, *What to Keep*, will be released by Finishing Line Press in early 2025. Carlene lives and works in northern New Hampshire.

Alison Stone

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with poems published in hundreds of magazines such as *Poetry*, *Rattle* and the *North American Review*. The winner of the 2020 Libretto prize and author of four poetry collections and seven chapbooks, his poems have been performed and broadcast globally.

MJ L'Espérance is a poet and teacher from Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal. She writes about identity, disability, loss and lust. Her work can be found online (Anti-Heroine Chic, Sledgehammer, Remington Review) and heard on the stage of Throw! Poetry Collective's monthly slam. In her spare time, she likes to run after cats in back alleys and walk barefoot on the grass. She's on Instagram @mj.lesperance.

Alison Stone has published nine full-length collections, including Zombies at the Disco (Jacar Press, 2019), Caught in the Myth (NYQ Books, 2019), Dazzle (Jacar Press, 2017), Ordinary Magic, (NYQ Books, 2016), Dangerous Enough (Presa Press 2014), and They Sing at Midnight, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award; as well as three chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, others. She has been awarded *Poetry's* Frederick Bock Prize and *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. www.stonepoetry.org www.stonetarot.com

Steve Deutsch is poetry editor of Centered Magazine and is poet in residence at the Bellefonte Art Museum. Steve was nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. His Chapbook, *Perhaps You Can*, was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full length books, *Persistence of Memory*, *Going, Going, Gone*, and *Slipping Away* were published by Kelsay. Brooklyn was awarded the Sinclair Poetry Prize from Evening Street Press and published in 2023.

Michael Penny has published five books and in over forty journals. He lives on an island near Vancouver, BC, where he pursues his interest in land use planning and the environment as the volunteer chair of the island's Advisory Planning Commission

Angela Hoffman lives in Wisconsin. With her retirement from teaching and the pandemic coinciding, she took to writing poetry. Her poetry has been widely published. Angela's collections include *Resurrection Lily* 2022, *Olly Olly Oxen Free* 2023, and *Hold the Contraries*, forthcoming 2024 (Kelsay Books).

Allison Whittenberg's novels are *Sweet Thang*, *Hollywood and Maine*, *Life is Fine*, *Tutored* (Random House 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2010). Her work has appeared in *Flying Island*, *Feminist Studies*, *Inconclast*, and *The Ekphrastic Review*. She is the author of the

full-length short story collection, *Carnival of Reality* (Loyola University Press, 2022). Whittenberg is a six-time Pushcart Prize nominee.

Strider Marcus Jones – is a poet, law graduate and former civil servant from Salford, England with proud Celtic roots in Ireland and Wales. He is the editor and publisher of *Lothlorien Poetry Journal* <https://lothlorienpoetryjournal.blogspot.com/>. A member of The Poetry Society, his five published books of poetry <https://stridermarcusjonespoetry.wordpress.com/> reveal a maverick, moving between cities, playing his saxophone in smoky rooms.

His poetry has been published in over 200 publications, including: The Huffington Post USA; The Stray Branch Literary Magazine; Crack The Spine Literary Magazine; The Lampeter Review and Dissident Voice.

Douglas K Currier holds an MFA in Poetry from the University of Pittsburgh. He has published in several journals: *Comstock Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Stone*, *Poetica Review* among others. Author of three collections of poetry in Spanish and two in English, he lives in Winooski, Vermont, and Riachuelo, Argentina.

Trier Ward is a mother, poet, and scientist. She grew up as an Air Force brat living around the world and has lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico for the last seven years. She performs at several open mics in the area including Voices of the Barrio. Her interests include the arts, social activism, and wildlife rehabilitation. Her poetry has appeared in *The Nervous Breakdown*, *Bohemia*, *Chachalaca Review*, and *Mad Swirl*. She is the author of two collections of poetry: *Bruises and Love Bites* (Penhall Publishing, 2014) and *Hollowscape* (Penhall Publishing, 2016). Her work explores the lyrical, elemental, and experiential. Find her on Instagram @trierward.

Diane Frank is author of eight books of poems, two novels, and a photo memoir of her 400 mile trek in the Nepal Himalayas. *While Listening to the Enigma Variations: New and Selected Poems* won the 2022 Next Generation Indie Book Award for Poetry. She is editor of *Fog and Light: San Francisco through the Eyes of the Poets Who Live Here*. Diane plays cello in the Golden Gate Symphony. *Blackberries in the Dream House*, her first novel, won the Chelson Award for Fiction and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Website: <http://dianefrank.net/>

Joan McNerney's poetry is published worldwide in over thirty-five countries in numerous literary magazines. Four Best of the Net nominations have been awarded to her. *The Muse in Miniature*, *Love Poems for Michael*, and *At Work* are available on Amazon.com. A new title *Light & Shadows* has recently been released.

Gayle Lauradunn's REACHING FOR AIR, Finalist for Best First Book of Poetry (Texas Institute of Letters); ALL THE WILD AND HOLY: A Life of Eunice Williams, 1696-1785, a book length persona poem, won the National Poetry Book Award (North Street Books). THE GEOGRAPHY OF ABSENCE is her third book. Poems have been published in numerous journals, online, and in national and international anthologies, as well as being included in numerous art exhibits. Several poems have been adapted and performed on stage. For seven years she worked with Vietnam veterans who spoke to high school students about the realities of war and military service. She is a passionate traveller, and has been to over 40 countries.

John Muro is a three-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize, as well as the Best of the Net Award, John Muro is a resident of Connecticut, a graduate of Trinity College and a lover of all things chocolate. He has authored two books – *In the Lilac Hour* and *Pastoral Suite* – in 2020 and 2022, respectively, and both were published by Antrim House. John's work has appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including *Acumen*, *Barnstorm*, *Delmarva*, *Poetica Review*, *Sky Island* and the *Valparaiso Review*.

PD Lyons born and raised in the USA travelled and lived abroad. Since 1998 has resided in Ireland. Lyons received Mattatuck College Award for Outstanding Achievement in Poetry, Bachelor of Science with honours from Teikyo Post University. The work of PD Lyons has appeared in many formats throughout the world. Lyons published poetry collections by Lapwing Press, Belfast and erbacce Press, Liverpool. Winner of the annual erbacce-press International Poetry Competition for 2019.

Martina Gallegos emigrated from Mexico and got a Master's degree after a massive, near fatal hemorrhagic stroke. Find her works in Poetry Super Highway, The Bloom, WFWP: Poetry Festival, Canada, LA Magazine, and When the Virus Came Calling:

COVID-19 Strikes America: Published by Golden Foothills Press, edited by, Thelma T. Reyna.

Blissfully retired in Clackamas, Oregon, **Carolyn Martin** is a lover of gardening and snorkeling, feral cats and backyard birds, writing and photography. Since the only poem she wrote in high school was red penciled “extremely maudlin,” she is amazed she has continued to write. Her poems have appeared in more than 175 journals throughout North America, Australia, and the UK. See more at www.carolynmartinpoet.com

Steve Deutsch is poetry editor of Centered Magazine and is poet in residence at the Bellefonte Art Museum. Steve was nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. His Chapbook, *Perhaps You Can*, was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full length books, *Persistence of Memory*, *Going, Going, Gone*, and *Slipping Away* were published by Kelsay. Brooklyn was awarded the Sinclair Poetry Prize from Evening Street Press and published in 2023.

Joan Mc Nerney has been the recipient of three scholarships. She has recited her work at the National Arts Club, New York City, State University of New York, Oneonta, McNay Art Institute, San Antonio and the University of Houston, Texas, Published worldwide in over thirty five countries, her work has appeared in literary publications too numerous to mention. Four Best of the Net nominations have been awarded to her. *The Muse in Miniature*, *Love Poems for Michael* and *At Work* are available on Amazon.com A new release entitled *Light & Shadow* explores the recent historic COVID pandemic.

Maureen Teresa McCarthy has published poems & essays in BloomLater, ComstockReview, Months to Years, PenWoman, PlumTreeTavern, Tiny Seed, Writing in a Woman’s Voice, others. Her work focuses on nature, imagination and myth. She has lived and written in California, Europe, and Mexico, but is at home in the Finger Lakes of central New York.

Daniel P. Stokes has published poetry widely in literary magazines in Ireland, Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada, and has won several poetry prizes. He has written three stage plays which have been professionally produced in Dublin, London and at the Edinburgh Festival.

Steve Deutsch is poetry editor of Centered Magazine and is poet in residence at the Bellefonte Art Museum. Steve was nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. His Chapbook, *Perhaps You Can*, was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full length books, *Persistence of Memory*, *Going, Going, Gone*, and *Slipping Away* were published by Kelsay. Brooklyn was awarded the Sinclair Poetry Prize from Evening Street Press and published in 2023.

Alec Solomita is a writer working in the Boston area. His fiction has appeared in the Southwest Review, The Mississippi Review, Southword Journal, among other publications. He was shortlisted by the Bridport Prize and Southword Journal. His poetry has appeared in Poetica, MockingHeart Journal, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Amethyst Review, The Lake, The Galway Review, and elsewhere, including several anthologies. His poetry chapbook "Do Not Forsake Me," was published in 2017. His full-length poetry book, "Hard To Be a Hero," was released by Kelsay Books in the spring of 2021.

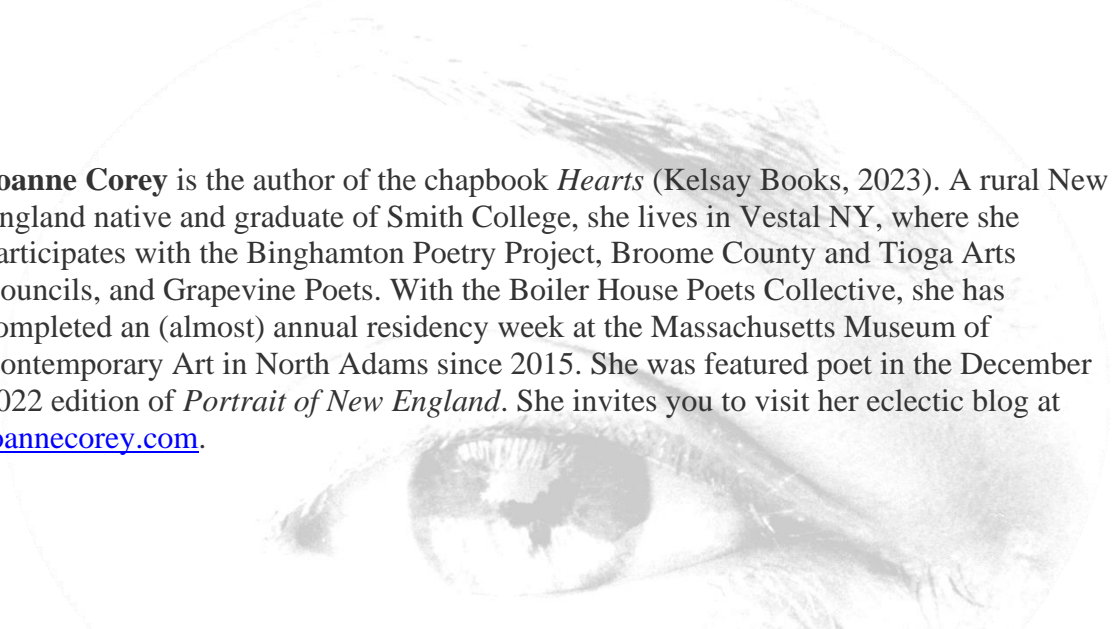
Alison Stone has published nine full-length collections, including *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2019), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award; as well as three chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, others. She has been awarded *Poetry's* Frederick Bock Prize and *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. www.stonepoetry.org www.stonetarot.com

Scott Norman Rosenthal is somewhere on the "autistic spectrum". He grew up without proper sensory assimilation, which contributed to his affinity for literary craft. He wasn't allowed to finish high school. He studied poetical composition at college level by invitation of Prof. Stephen Dunn. Fall Semester, 1977. Stockton State College, Pomona, N.J. Subsequently, Stephen was awarded the Pulitzer In Poetry for Year 2000.

Adrian S. Potter, the winner of the 2022 Lumiere Review Prose Award, writes poetry and prose in Minnesota when he's not busy silently judging your beer selection and

record collection. He is the author of three books, including [And the Monster Swallows You Whole](#) (Stillhouse Books) and [Field Guide to the Human Condition](#) (CW Books). Adrian's words have appeared in *North American Review*, *Rigorous*, *The Comstock Review*, and *Obsidian*. Visit him online at <http://adrianspotter.com/>.

Sam Moe has received residencies from VCCA and Château d'Orquevaux. She is the recipient of a 2023 St. Joe Community Foundation Poetry Fellowship from *Longleaf Writers Conference*. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming from *Peatsmoke Journal*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Sundog Lit*, and others. Her first full-length collection, *Heart Weeds*, was published with Alien Buddha Press (Sept. '22) and her second full-length collection *Grief Birds* was published with *Bullshit Lit* (Apr. '23). Her third full-length *Cicatrizing the Daughters* is forthcoming from *FlowerSong Press*.



Joanne Corey is the author of the chapbook *Hearts* (Kelsay Books, 2023). A rural New England native and graduate of Smith College, she lives in Vestal NY, where she participates with the Binghamton Poetry Project, Broome County and Tioga Arts Councils, and Grapevine Poets. With the Boiler House Poets Collective, she has completed an (almost) annual residency week at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams since 2015. She was featured poet in the December 2022 edition of *Portrait of New England*. She invites you to visit her eclectic blog at joannecorey.com.

Patrick Connors first chapbook, *Scarborough Songs*, was released by Lyricalmyrical Press in 2013, and charted on the Toronto Poetry Map. Other publication credits include: *The Toronto Quarterly*; *Spadina Literary Review*; *Sharing Spaces*; *Tamaracks*; and *Tending the Fire*. His first full collection, *The Other Life*, was released in 2021 by Mosaic Press. His new chapbook, *Worth the Wait*, was released this Spring by Cactus Press.

Rikki Santer's poems have appeared in various publications including *Ms. Magazine*, *Poetry East*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Slab*, *Slipstream*, [PANK], *Crab Orchard Review*, *RHINO*, *Grimm*, *Hotel Amerika* and *The Main Street Rag*. Her work has received many honors including 2023 Ohio Poet of the Year, Pushcart, Ohioana and Ohio Poet book award nominations as well as a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her twelfth poetry collection, *Resurrection Letter: Leonora, Her Tarot, and Me*, is a sequence in tribute to the surrealist artist Leonora Carrington and was recently published by the arts press, Cereal Box Studio.

Mark A. Murphy is Editor of POETiCA REViEW. His poems have appeared in 18 countries in several hundred literary magazines in print and online. A 7 time Pushcart Nominee, his latest book is 'Ontologistics Of A Time Traveller,' was published by World Inkers Publishing, November 202.



from **“Ontologistics Of A Time Traveller”**
New book of eco-poems by **Mark A. Murphy**

Gaia

Perhaps we returned to you too late.
Green and lovely mother.
Unchanging mother,
buried in the oceans of the past.
Up to your neck in the slops and spoils
of enlightenment.
We're no longer students of philosophy.
Poetry. Mythology.
We're no longer the young poets
who wrote all the best lines.
Wanderers in the Minotaur's labyrinth
of blood and illusion.

The queen of sea and shadow
has grabbed us now, as if by the balls.
But still we're guided by a star
of hope. And only hope
can scupper or save us.



NOW Available from **Amazon UK**: <https://shorturl.at/hBFRV>

and Amazon USA: <https://rb.gy/iv1j5j>

“How we perceive the world affects how we behave.
Our behavior is killing the planet. If we succeed
in changing our behavior, it will be in great measure
because of books like this one.

I am grateful to Mark Murphy for writing this book.”

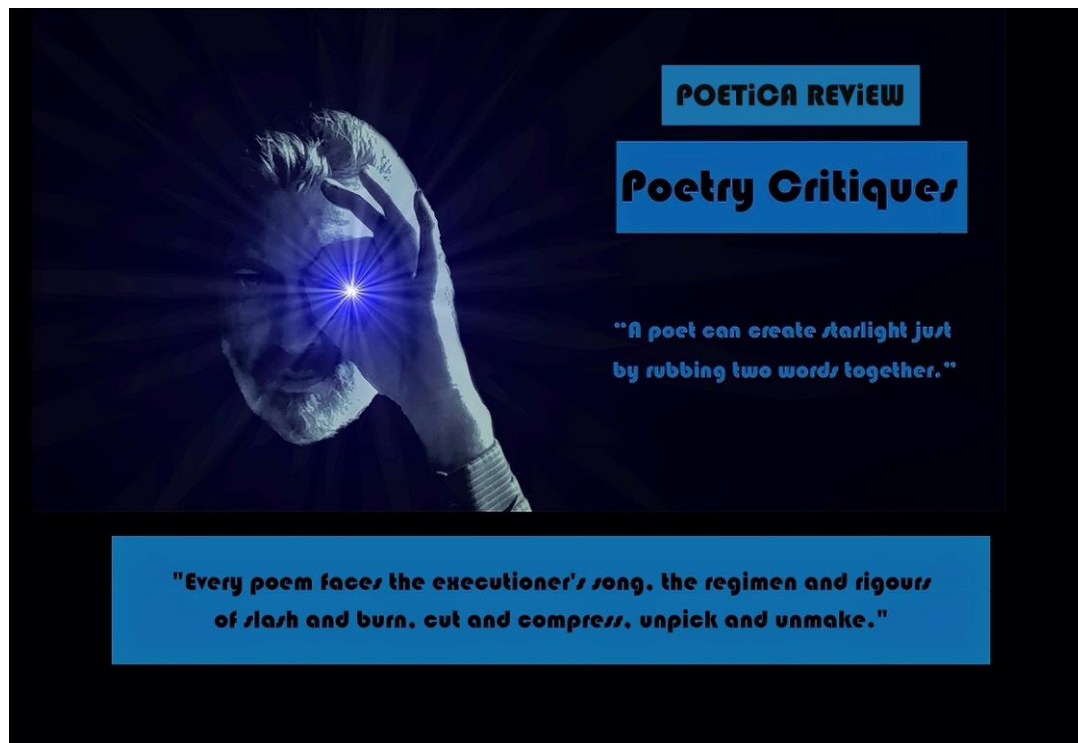
[Derrick Jensen](#)



Contact: info.worldinkers@gmail.com or marcomurcadagh@gmail.com

Poetry Critiques

POETiCA REViEW editors can critique your work in 2024. Contact us with one to three poems for consideration, if you think your work might benefit. Please send in body of email and as an attachment (Times New Roman, 12 pt) to editors@poeticareview.co.uk and we'll get back to you with our proposals within one day to one week.



Mission Statement/Editor's Note

“What the mass media offer is not popular art, but entertainment which is intended to be consumed like food, forgotten and replaced by a new dish. This is bad for everyone; the majority lose all genuine taste of their own, and the minority become cultural snobs.” **W.H. Auden**

There is only one standard for artistry of any kind, and that is excellence. This is not to exclude anyone from practising art. On the contrary, we wish to encourage the production of art from everyone, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexuality or gender. Many myths about art and literature have been propagated by various professors and academics in the West over the centuries (mainly by white, middle and upper class men, in the modern epoch) that would exclude most of the members of our society from doing art.

POETiCA REViEW stands in contradistinction to those values that promote the ‘good’ as esoteric, whilst excluding the vast majority from participation. We hope to give voice to the myriad of disparate voices within the artistic community, locally, and internationally, regardless of notoriety or who is currently favoured by this or that magazine. Our mission is to inject new blood into the poetry scene. We will not shy away from political poetry or indeed any poetry with an ‘edge’ (poetry at the margins).

The ‘great’ and the ‘good’ are not untouchable. Our ability to discern and define what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is what defines us as human beings. It is fundamental to our intellectual and emotional make up. One might say, it has become part of our human nature. But human nature is not immutable, nor are our ideas. Notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ change over time. However, what is clearly unacceptable to us at **POETiCA REViEW**, is the exclusion from doing art of any writer or artist on the grounds of any social or institutional barriers.

‘High art’, W.H. Auden lamented, only continues to exist in our society because its audience is too small to interest the mass media. Our mission is to make ‘high art’ accessible to all. Finally, we have no hidden agendas, our house is open. We exist to promote diversity. The only agenda for **POETiCA REViEW** is the search for excellence. Read, enjoy and feel free to submit!

Submissions and Guidelines

Before we go any further with our submission guidelines please note: we only publish work that excites us and we have confidence in (tickles our aesthetic taste buds) which means what we publish comes down to personal tastes. If we don't publish your work, it's not so much a judgment on the quality of your writing, as a reflection on our own personal preferences.

POETiCA REViEW exists to promote the work of new and older poets alike, the less fortunate, the dispossessed, those without a voice, but encourage the artistic talents of all, not just a privileged minority.

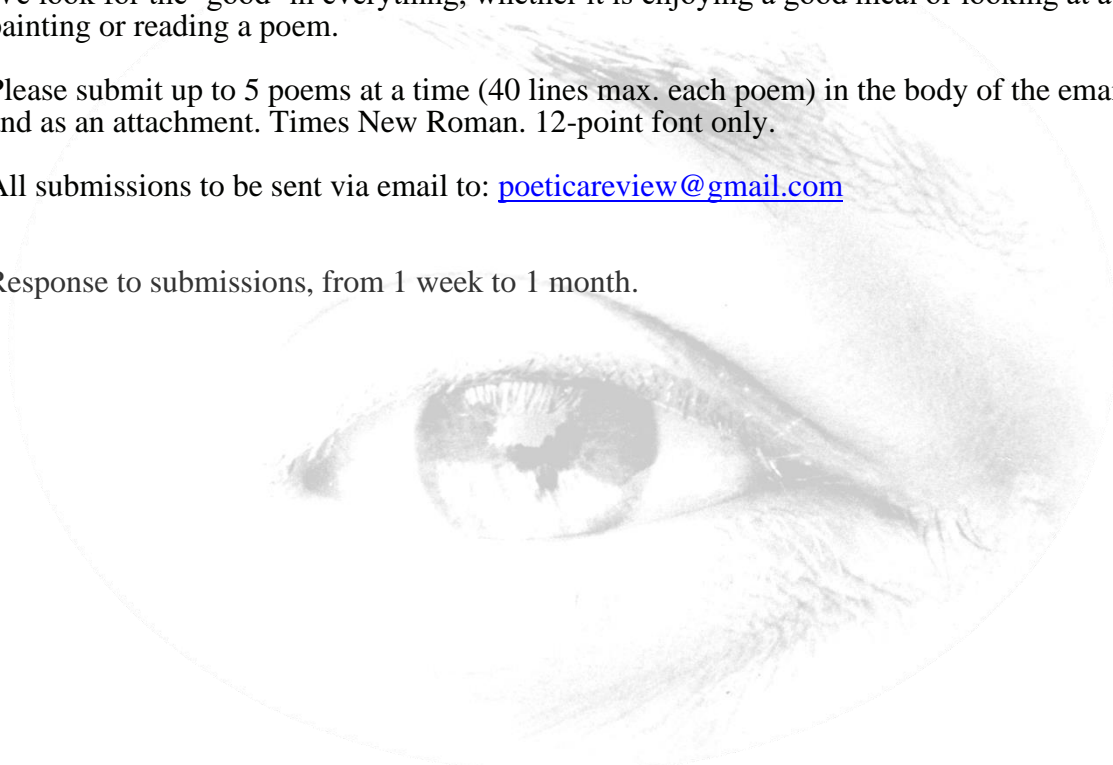
All are welcome to submit. We believe a poetry ezine/journal with the philosophy of 'inclusivity' at its core can act as a springboard to support further artistic development, and encourage writers to keep producing and to participate more widely in the art scene.

POETiCA REViEW appreciates the hard work of others involved in the arts. It is our belief that all thinking beings are capable of producing good art, talents vary enormously among individuals, but we humans share a common language of ideas and feelings and can all make our individual contributions felt in the social and artistic life of our society. We look for the 'good' in everything, whether it is enjoying a good meal or looking at a painting or reading a poem.

Please submit up to 5 poems at a time (40 lines max. each poem) in the body of the email and as an attachment. Times New Roman. 12-point font only.

All submissions to be sent via email to: poeticareview@gmail.com

Response to submissions, from 1 week to 1 month.



POETiCA REViEW

for the many, not the few