

# FRESH WORDS

An International Literary Magazine

## POETRY

Choi Paul Yearn

Dan Campion

Dana Hall

Julene Waffle

Martha Patterson

Norton Hodges

Pris Campbell

Robert René Galván

## SHORT STORY

Professor  
ARTURO

## TRAVELOGUE

Sharon Baker

## BOOK REVIEW

Dianne MORITZ

## MONOLOGUE

Donna Latham

## ONE ACT PLAY

Judy Klass

# Fresh Words

Volume 2 | Number 1 | April 2022

**EDITOR:**

**Som**

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# Editor's Note

## Editor's Note

Dear Readers and Literature Lovers!

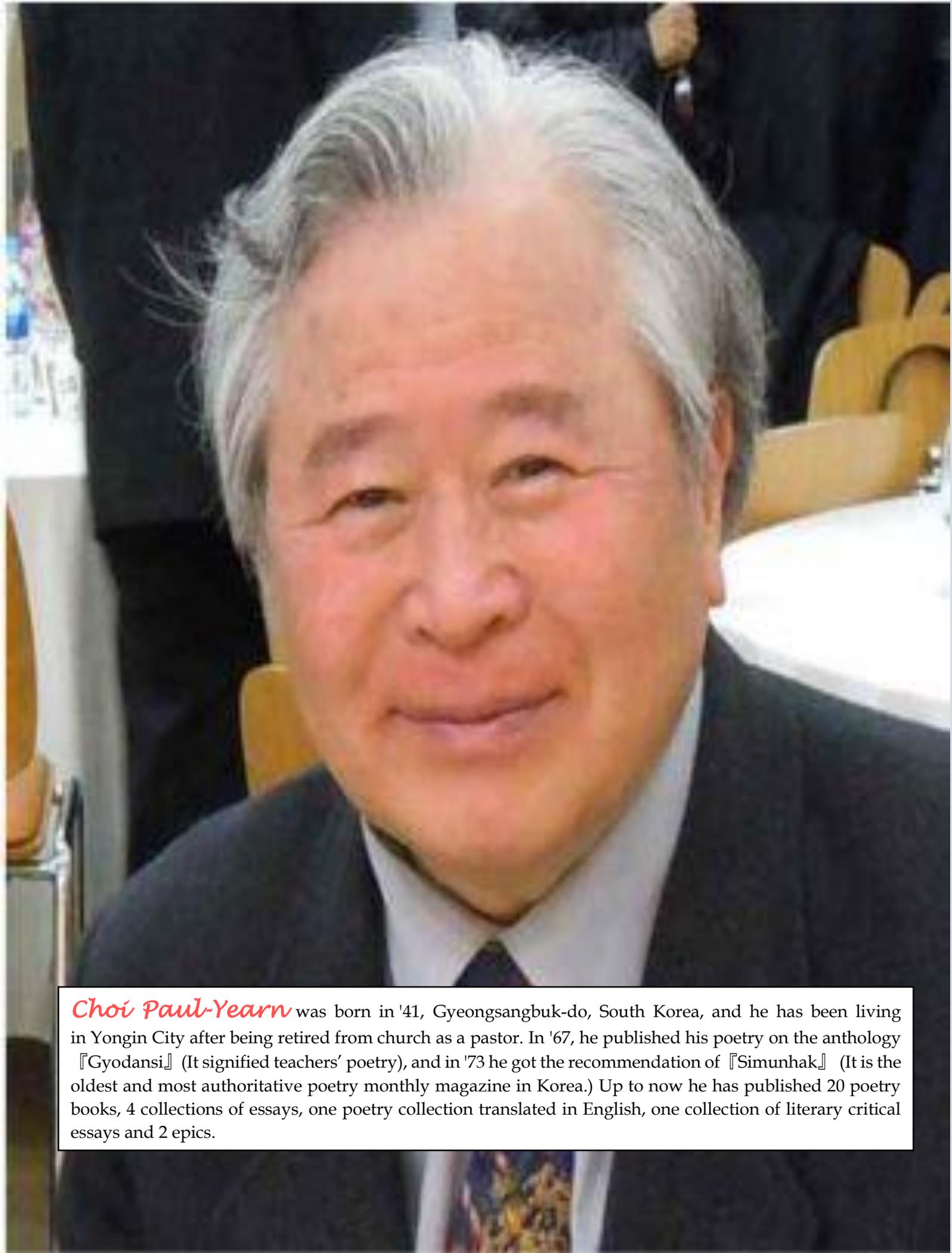
This issue gives you a delightful opportunity to taste the different genres of literature - poetry, short story, travelogue, monologue, one act play, and book review. The literary pieces included in this issue not only touch your heart but also tend to heal your troubled soul. Here you can find the glorious past, adorable present and splendid future under one canopy.

Read and enjoy this issue.

Best wishes!

**Som**

*POETRY*



*Choi Paul-Yearn* was born in '41, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea, and he has been living in Yongin City after being retired from church as a pastor. In '67, he published his poetry on the anthology 『Gyodansi』 (It signified teachers' poetry), and in '73 he got the recommendation of 『Simunhak』 (It is the oldest and most authoritative poetry monthly magazine in Korea.) Up to now he has published 20 poetry books, 4 collections of essays, one poetry collection translated in English, one collection of literary critical essays and 2 epics.

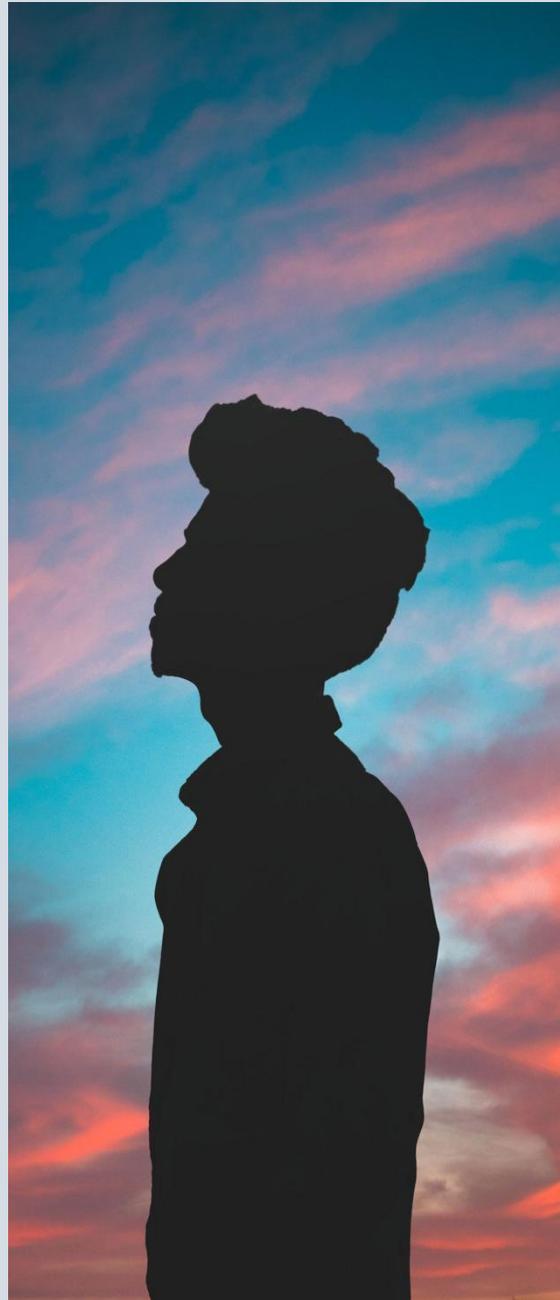
## Lost way in Chiak Mt.

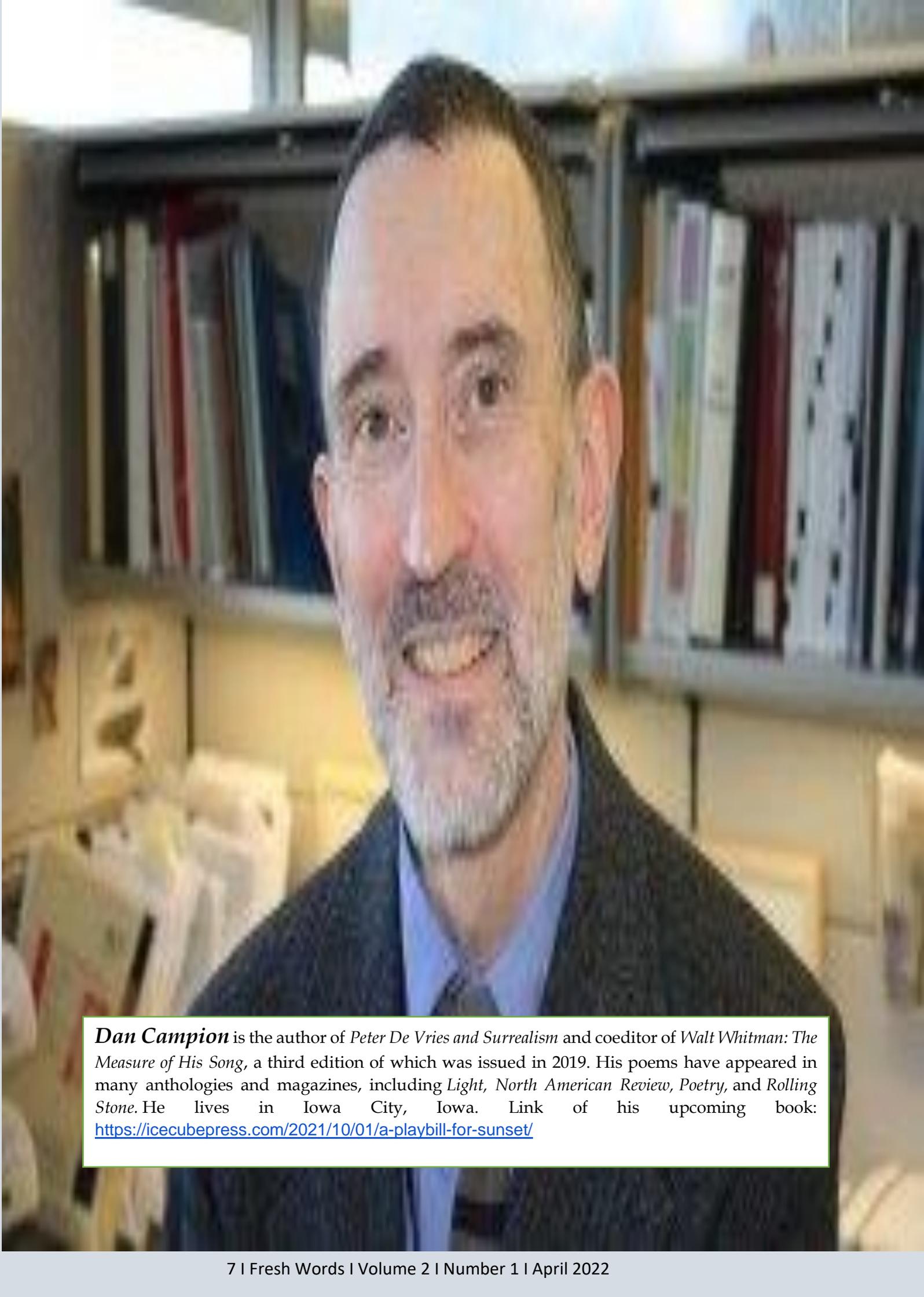
*by Choi Poul-Yearn*

Several years ago leaving for a picnic  
Towards October sky like the deep sea  
I was passing through the jagged peaks  
Of Chiak-Mountain like rooster's crested  
By the flames of various colored leaves

Like a four years old child  
Following a butterfly fluttering right in front  
Fascinated by the deep blue sky  
Staring up the sky I went past the peaks  
Knowing nothing how fast time goes  
Losing to know how to go back.

The blue sky flows into my eyes  
Like a stomach, like a breast  
It overflows like spring water in the valley  
My joyful song is a white cloud  
It flew far away in the blue sky  
But like that I forgot to go back.





**Dan Campion** is the author of *Peter De Vries and Surrealism* and coeditor of *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song*, a third edition of which was issued in 2019. His poems have appeared in many anthologies and magazines, including *Light*, *North American Review*, *Poetry*, and *Rolling Stone*. He lives in Iowa City, Iowa. Link of his upcoming book: <https://icecubepress.com/2021/10/01/a-playbill-for-sunset/>

## Those Who Remember the Past

by Dan Champion

Those who remember the past  
also are condemned to repeat it.  
The best and brightest read  
Herodotus, they read Thucydides,  
and made the same mistakes  
as Croesus, Cyrus, Acibiades.  
Corcyra was the Hellenes' Vietnam.  
The Scythians are better left  
to work things out among themselves,  
as "history is the nightmare" and et cetera.  
O Gaza and Jerusalem, Belfast, Kabul,  
Rome, Nay Pyi Taw, D.C., Tehran,  
Chicago, Charlottesville, please  
pray for us, the readers of your history.



## Off Icaria

by Dan Champion

From Icarus's point of view  
the Brueghels and the Audens lounge  
around his ocean landing zone  
but make a frantic rush at last  
until, quite suddenly, they're gone,  
and he's plunged in among more sharks  
and parasitic worms and eels  
than he can even estimate.  
While feathers settle up above  
on wine-dark soft Aegean swells  
he sinks, as fast as Alice fell,  
into the dark Devonian  
and glimpses with astonishment  
the birth of claws and snail shells.  
From Crete to the Dodecanese,  
he thinks, there's something going on  
I haven't time to grasp, nor did  
my father, in his wisdom, guess  
when he tried turning us to birds.  
It couldn't end well, craft or art,  
that lost its bearings at the start.  
O, Daedalus, I almost touched  
the sun! Behold the cold sea floor.



**Dana Hall** is a playwright, actor, and mental health therapist. She has had dozens of plays produced across the US and internationally. She took home a Best of Fringe award at the Women’s Theatre Festival (NC) for her examination of social disparities with the play, *No Justice*. She is the 2022 Femuscript (FL) Monologue Winner performing her original piece *Snowglobe*. Her Halloween-themed comedy, *Don’t Lose Your Head*, was published with HEUER 2022. Her poetry is featured in *Be Kind*, an anthology published in 2021. In addition, the New York Journal recognized her as one of the 50 under 50 most influential creators during the pandemic list 2022.

Her Social Media Links:  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DanaLHall>  
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/danahallcreates/>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DanaHallCreates>  
Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/danahalltherapy/>

## **Bloom**

*by Dana Hall*

*O*h, tender one, tell us your story.  
How you dreamt in the darkness beneath,  
through the cold solemn nights.

How the fertile soil preserved the promise of the  
Spring to come.

How the prospect of light nourished you.

Oh, tender one, here you are now-

You bloom  
each season  
for them.

But they never ask your story-

They stop and admire your petals-

Not I.

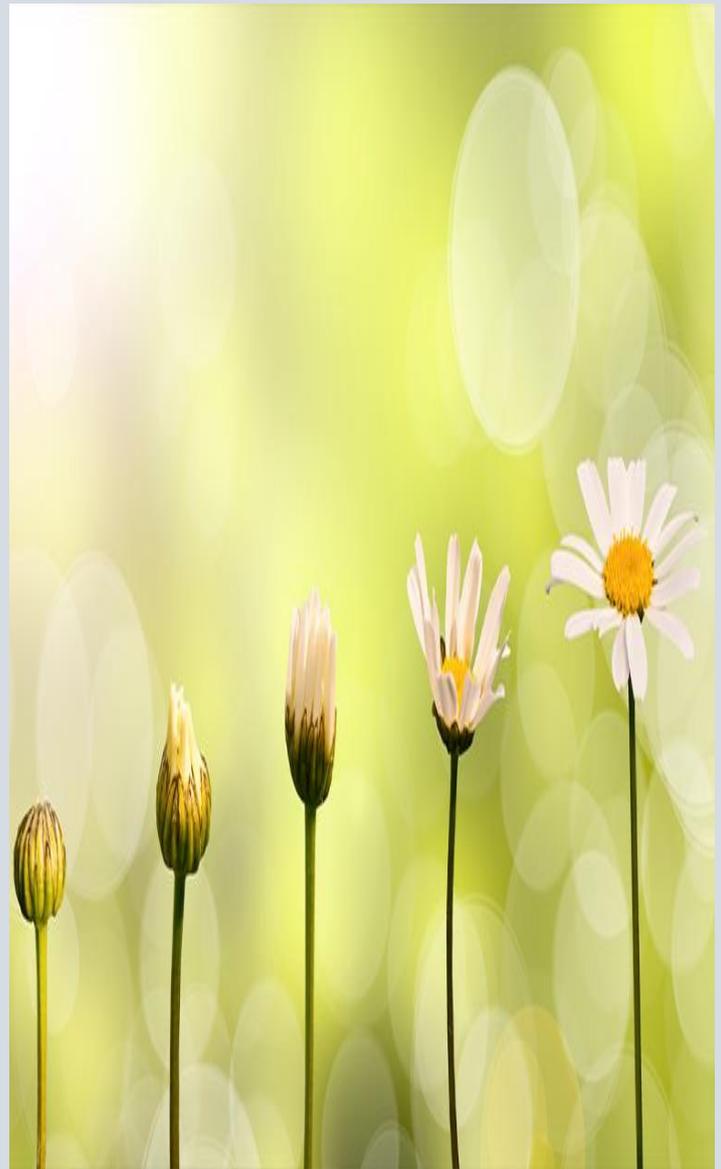
I am enamored with your roots.

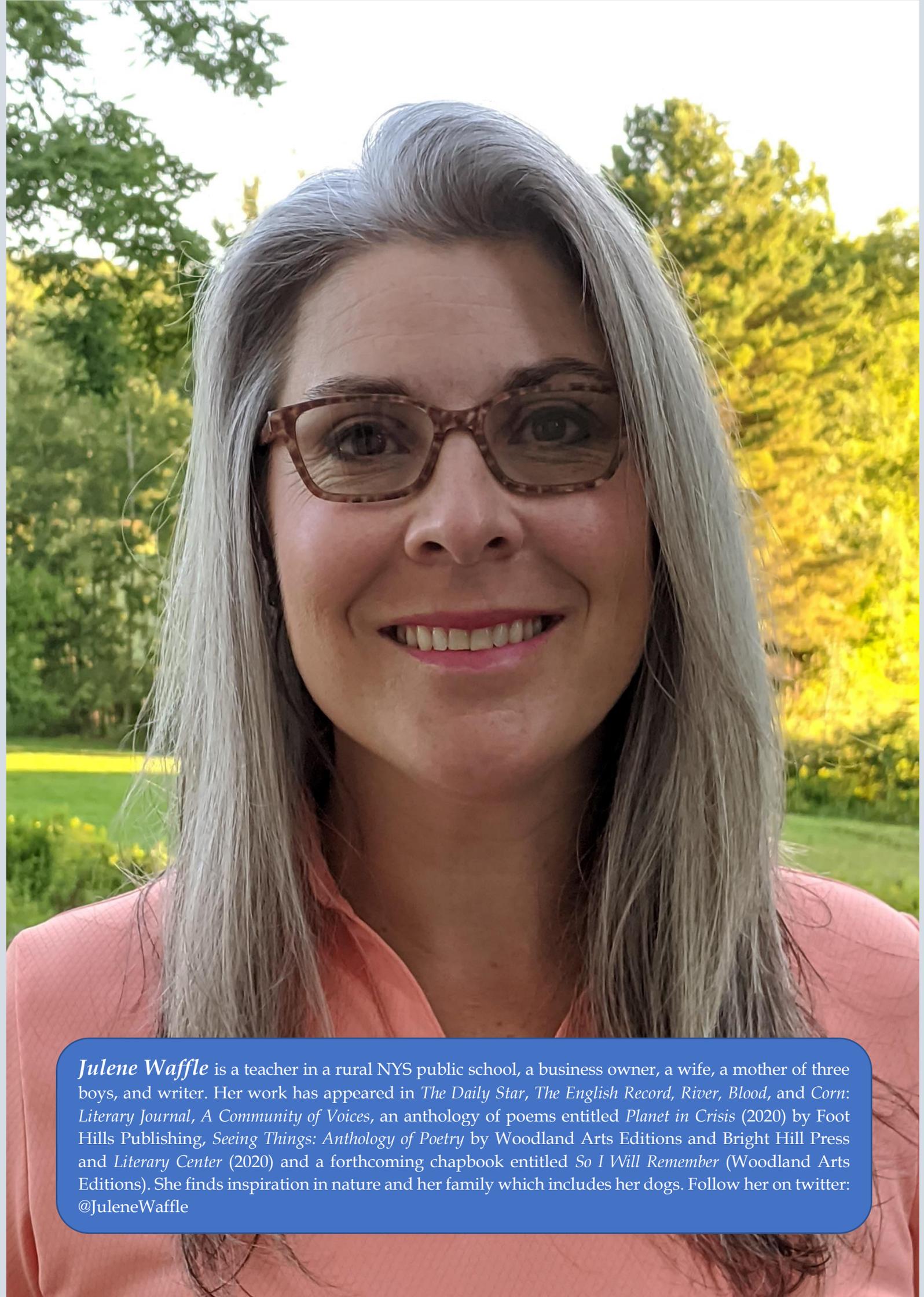
Reaching,

Stretching,

Nourishing-

They tell us how in the midst of it all,  
you knew exactly what you were meant to be.





**Julene Waffle** is a teacher in a rural NYS public school, a business owner, a wife, a mother of three boys, and writer. Her work has appeared in *The Daily Star*, *The English Record*, *River, Blood, and Corn: Literary Journal*, *A Community of Voices*, an anthology of poems entitled *Planet in Crisis* (2020) by Foot Hills Publishing, *Seeing Things: Anthology of Poetry* by Woodland Arts Editions and Bright Hill Press and *Literary Center* (2020) and a forthcoming chapbook entitled *So I Will Remember* (Woodland Arts Editions). She finds inspiration in nature and her family which includes her dogs. Follow her on twitter: @JuleneWaffle

## Ode to Feathers in a Ball Jar

by *Julene Waffle*

You are an evolutionary novelty,  
follicle formed from the same keratins

that hatch scale,  
carapace, beak, claw.

From proximal umbilicus  
you marry body to air,  
earth to flight,  
gravity to sky.

Your barbicels and barbules catch the air  
like an unsuspecting fish hooked to a line;  
you press wind to your service  
and tell it where to take you.

Ancient as dinosaurs, an epidermal coat:  
waterproof, insulated vanes  
and powderdown  
more dense than your hollow bones.

From plucking and molting  
to fletching and bedding,  
and the quills authors used to pen  
their own feathered verses,  
you are simply complex  
and ordinarily beautiful  
in the Ball Jar  
beside my bed.

## On Flying

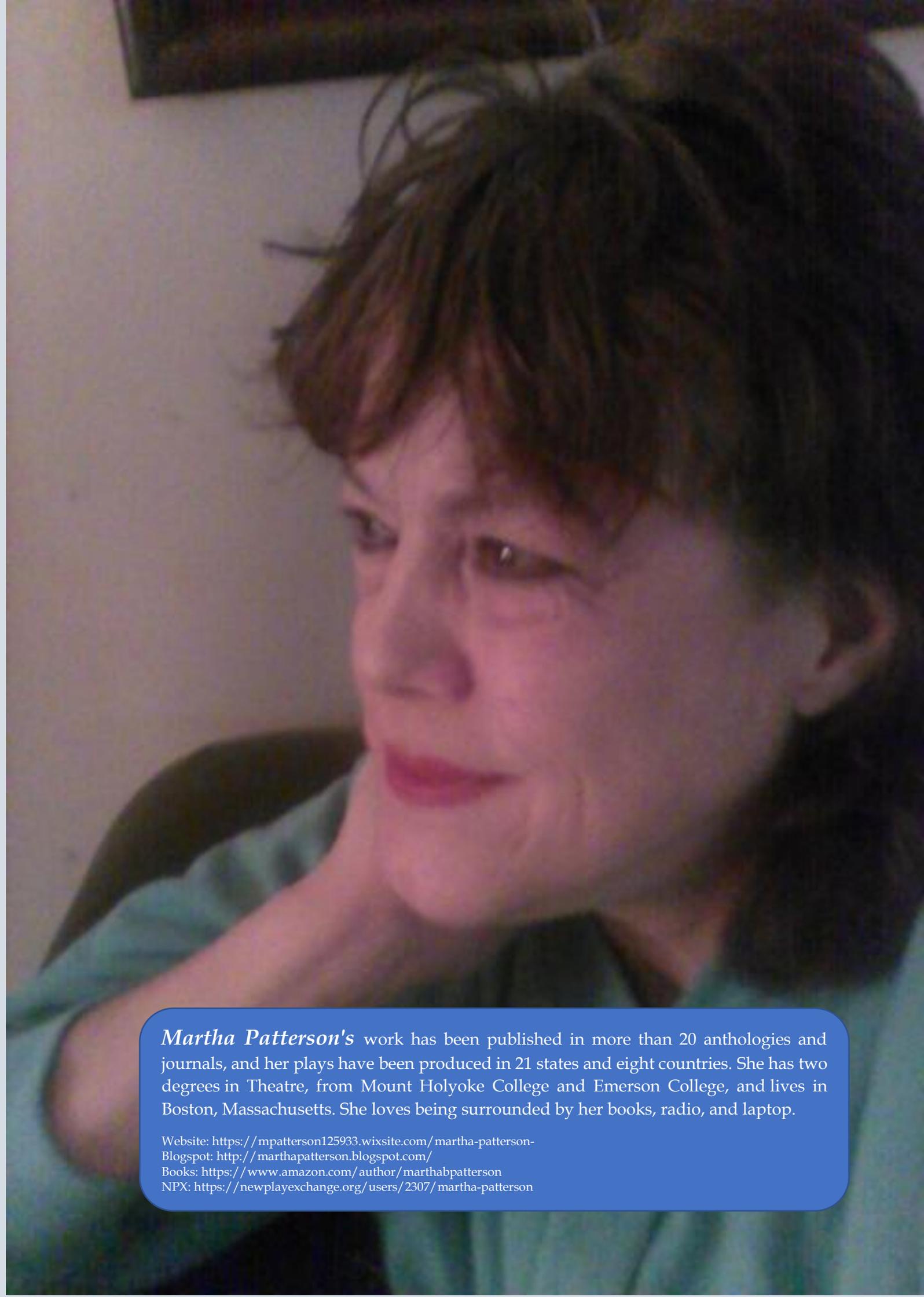
by *Julene Waffle*

The hungry night swallows us whole  
as we lumber through  
the viscera of sky and  
cumulus clouds

until suddenly the stars above  
demand attention from the universe,  
and below, all we can see through  
our windows are circles of home  
dotted by fabricated starlight  
breaking through clouds  
one opening at a time;

We pay fate one sliver of faith  
with each daring breath  
And turn of the turbine,  
praying it is enough for safe passage.





*Martha Patterson's* work has been published in more than 20 anthologies and journals, and her plays have been produced in 21 states and eight countries. She has two degrees in Theatre, from Mount Holyoke College and Emerson College, and lives in Boston, Massachusetts. She loves being surrounded by her books, radio, and laptop.

Website: <https://mpatterson125933.wixsite.com/martha-patterson->

Blogspot: <http://marthapatterson.blogspot.com/>

Books: <https://www.amazon.com/author/marthabpatterson>

NPX: <https://newplayexchange.org/users/2307/martha-patterson>

## Faith

by *Martha Patterson*

*I*t wasn't long before I turned 32  
That I reflected on the multitude of mistakes  
I'd made in life –  
And still, after that, I made so many more.

When old people offer “wisdom,”  
Sometimes I do listen cautiously,  
But just as often I wish for them  
That they'd kept learning and would stop  
Thinking of how much they have to teach.  
Life isn't over 'til one dies, perhaps not even then,  
And one ought always to maintain  
A naive curiosity and exploration about living  
And the natural world.

But here I am being “wise.”  
My young friends turn me onto music  
And explain technology in ways I wish  
I better understood. They can instruct me.  
The gift of life appears to mean maintaining  
consciousness  
And enjoying slumber when it comes,  
To rest and dream, and wake with resignation,  
And a kind of blind, and optimistic, and everlasting  
faith.

At 65 I am not ready to be “done.”  
But I'm too impatient! The tragedies and comedies  
of life  
Are insurmountable and ceaseless.

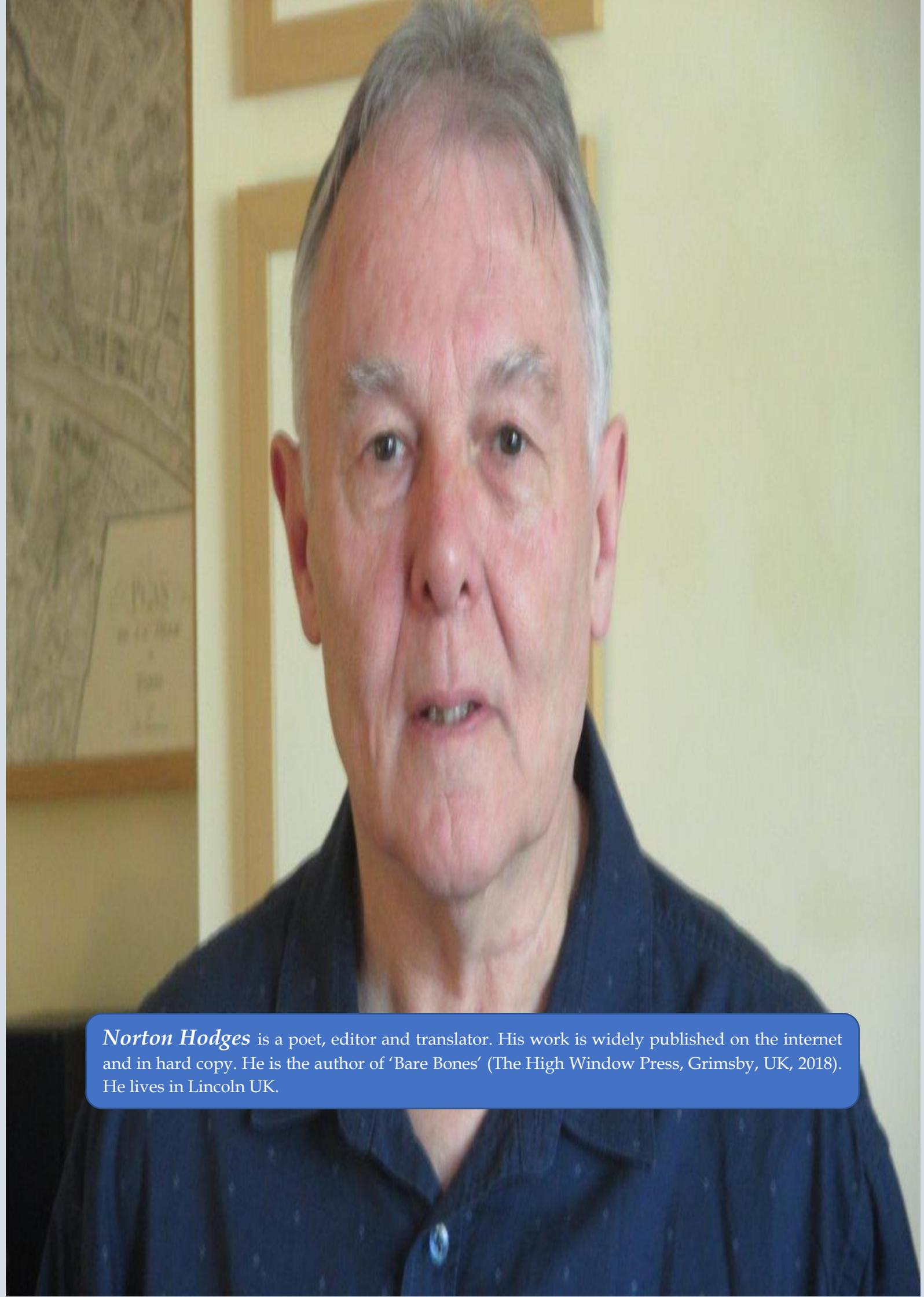
## The Snowy, Piney Woods

by *Martha Patterson*

*T*hat slice of lemon moon  
In frosty winter  
Shines in the tea-dark sky  
Above the bracken of  
The piney woods,  
Above raccoons and possum  
Foraging for food.

How I'd like to drink that sky  
In my warm abode  
While snow falls gently  
Over the cracked bark and  
Little cones at ends of thread-like  
Needles of the trees, and while  
I ponder that “I'm at peace in snow.”





***Norton Hodges*** is a poet, editor and translator. His work is widely published on the internet and in hard copy. He is the author of 'Bare Bones' (The High Window Press, Grimsby, UK, 2018). He lives in Lincoln UK.

## QVC

by *Norton Hodges*

*T*owards the end of his life, Dad liked the shopping channels.

Disappointed at their weekly routine – The Savacentre every Tuesday –

he switched to buying shiny objects from the TV.

Once he complained, ‘and on ...days we go to the *library*’,

as if I, his son, reader and writer, would sympathise with this proof of his restricted and miserable existence.

Just after retirement, he’d booked a coach trip to Germany

but Mum refused to go. Nervous and still mourning her mother

she once spent a month without going out. So, he did his duty.

He dealt with it all: diminishment, the death of romance.

He took her to a psychologist who made her go up and down

in the lift at the shopping centre until she wasn’t afraid any more.

I don’t blame him for filling the emptiness, it probably beat

sitting by the kitchen door making sure squirrels didn’t steal

the birdseed. After he died, of course, it was all just stuff.

## Memories of Japan

by *Norton Hodges*

*I* remember Japan so well,  
even though I’ve never been there:  
the temples, the gardens, the silence,  
the mindful people, the spiritual life.

How I wish I could go back  
but I’m committed to one thing or another  
and I have to pay what’s owing  
and I have no time to stop or sleep.



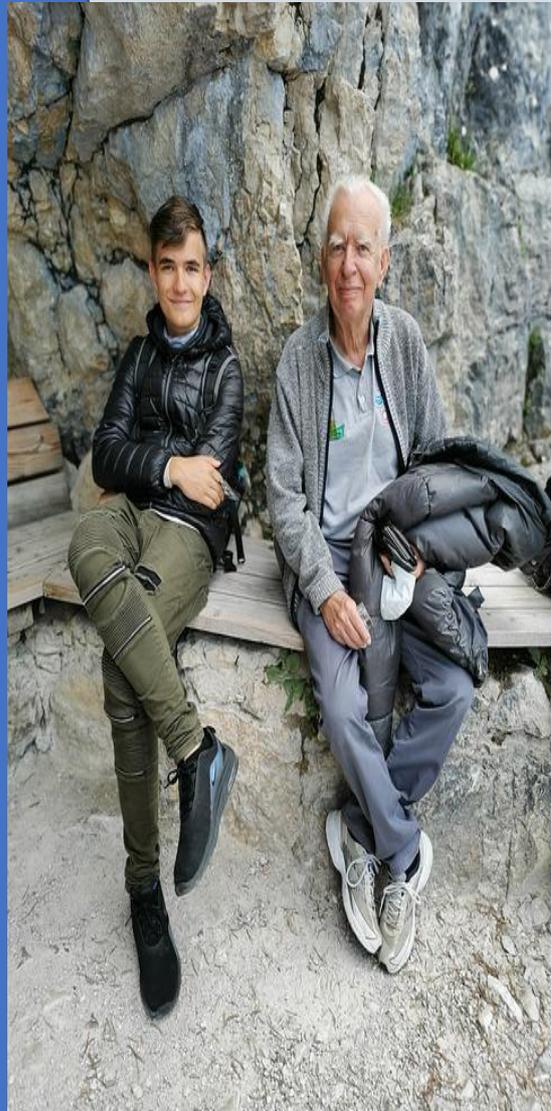


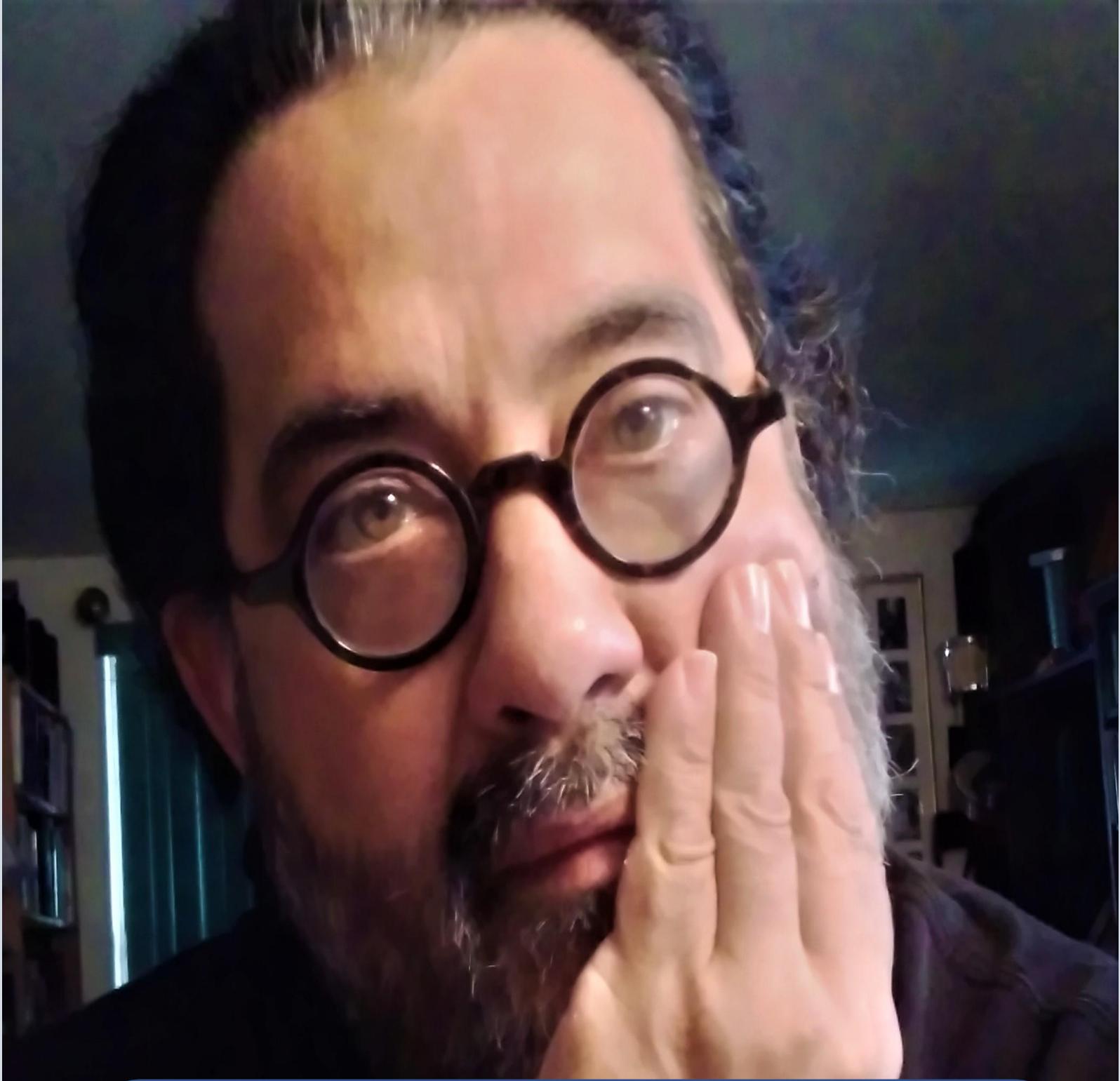
The poems of ***Pris Campbell*** have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Poets Artists*, *Nixes Mate*, *Rusty Truck*, *Bicycle Review*, *The Red Fez*, *Octopus Review*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, and *Outlaw Poetry*. Nominated six times for a Pushcart, the Small Press has published eight collections of her poetry. *My Southern Childhood*, from Nixes Mate Press is her most recent book. She also writes short forms and just this year took first place in the Marlene Mountain monoku contest and the Sanford Goldstein tanka competition. A former Clinical Psychologist, sailor and bicyclist until sidelined by ME/CFS in 1990, she makes her home with her husband in the Greater West Palm Beach, Florida.

## Soaring

*by Pris Campbell*

When the goodbyes become too much  
for your weakening heart, in your mind  
you travel to the grove where your parents' ashes lie.  
You bear homemade bread to break with them  
the same bread your grandmother taught you to make,  
You long for those memories from days  
when you thought you were invincible.  
The sweet soil scent fills your lungs.  
Wildflowers wave in the breeze.  
A ray of sunlight tugs you high  
until you are safe from need,  
safe from the pain of parting,  
safe from our lost love you thought  
would go on forever.  
That greatest of goodbyes finally arrives,  
the one you're yet reluctant to say.  
From my home I feel you leave.  
The pressure filled air compresses my heart.





**Robert René Galván**, born in San Antonio, resides in New York City where he works as a professional musician and poet. His collections of poems are *Meteors*, published by Lux Nova Press and *Undesirable: Race and Remembrance*, Somos en Escrito Foundation Press, *Standing Stones*, Finishing Line Press and *The Shadow of Time*, Adelaide Books. His poetry has been featured in such publications as *The Acentos Review*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Azahares Literary Magazine*, *Gyroscope*, *Hawaii Review*, *Hispanic Culture Review*, *Latino Book Review*, *Newtown Review*, *Panoply*, *Prachya Review*, *Sequestrum*, *Shoreline of Infinity*, *Somos en Escrito*, *Stillwater Review*, *West Texas Literary Review*, and *UU World*. He is a Shortlist Winner Nominee in the 2018 Adelaide Literary Award for Best Poem. Recently, his poems are featured in *Puro ChicanX Writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)* and in *Yellow Medicine Review: A Journal of Indigenous Literature, Art and Thought*. His poems have been nominated for Best of Web and the Pushcart Prize. His poem, *Awakening*, was featured in the author's voice on NPR as part of National Poetry Month in the Spring of 2021.

## Ancient Rose

*by Robert René Galván*

The old woman  
planted it carelessly,  
a climber  
with no place  
to climb,  
groans  
from  
aching roots  
to rise  
with thorns  
and meager  
blooms  
bereft of sun  
in the shade  
of the ash.  
I thrust  
a lance  
into the  
unforgiving  
earth,  
arms embrace  
with red  
and tender  
leaves,  
struggle  
to catch  
the mottled  
light.

## Easter 2021

*by Robert René Galván*

After a year  
of dismal exile,  
the delirious  
sun  
found my pale  
face;  
the magnolia  
tastes the air  
with its pink  
tongues,  
speckled koi  
emerge  
from the roots  
of the sleeping  
lotus  
and hunger  
awakens  
in the peregrine's  
dive.  
I step onto the grey  
grass,  
gaze across  
the staid water:

A solitary barge  
awaits a berth  
and skeletal masts  
are moored,  
not a single  
cloud,  
nor a meager  
breeze  
to stir  
the waking  
dream.  
The earth shutters  
in its tether,  
the golden host  
melts into the sound.



*Monologue*



*Donna Latham* is an award-winning author and playwright. She's made up stuff, acted it out, and written it down forever. *Bridges and Tunnels* received a Gold Medal from Moonbeam Children's Book Awards and was recommended by the National Science Teachers Association. Donna's numerous plays for adults and young audiences have been produced coast to coast. And *We Will Share the Sky* was the winner of the Theatre for Young Audiences national playwriting contest. Her books on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Donna-Latham/e/B001JP4G1Y>

# Selkie

## A Female Monologue

by *Donna Latham*

*I* found it. Memories flooded back, splashed over me in waves, as the Old Ones promised. I found it in the cellar. Stumbled upon my precious gray coat. Stashed in his double-locked oaken chest stowed there. My skin, long lost and now found. Found yesterday, when the fisherman left behind his skeleton keys. Bolted off to carouse at the pub. Forgot keys that always clanged from a leather cord wound round his waist.

The fisherman stole my skin years ago. He stalked shorelines with other ruffians. Louts tall as they were broad. Terrifying men armed with harpoons. Clubs. Chains. Men the Old Ones warned of, deep beneath the sea.

Been seven years since he captured me. I was reckless then. Laughed away the Old Ones after cavorting in waves. I lolled on shore, naked and pale. A pillow of coarse curls fanned beneath my head. I dozed. In human form.

“Well, well. What treasure washed ashore?”

The fisherman caught me unawares. He loomed over me, blocked out the midday sun. I scrambled for my skin. He was quicker. He tucked my pelt under a massive arm. Gripped my wee webbed hand. Hauled me to his shack like wreckage. Forced me be his wife. Gobsmacked by my unearthly beauty, so he claimed. As if that’s enough to right a wrong. Straightaway, villagers set to whispering. His big-bosomed mother elbowed fishwives aside. Rose on tiptoe to whisper in his ear.

“Better tae keep selkie ways oot o’ her memory.”

Seafaring chums tapped leaky noses between puffs of smoke and chugs of brown drink. They hissed advice.

“Best tae lock the skin away. Hide her coat? Steal her memories.”

“Aye! Lest yer selkie remember wild ways. Escape ye where waters are black as the Earl of Hell’s waistcoat.”

I glared at fisherfolk with fathomless eyes. No one gave a care for what I wanted. Nor wondered why I bolted each day to the shore. Nor fretted for loves I’d left behind. My seal husband. A mammoth bull, both gentle and ferocious. Our silver-spotted pups, enchanted all. I turned away, for I’d grant fisherfolk no satisfaction. They’d not spy seven salt tears escaped from my eyes.

The sea gives, and the sea takes. One fine thing it’s given me is patience. Patience over seven long years, trapped between Earth and Sea. Belonging to neither. Haunting both. The magic in me is old. Old as the sea. Magic spoken in a tongue ancient as time.

The fisherman's at sea today. Out in a rickety boat.  
I hurl ancient words across the waves:  
You've no right to pluck a wild creature from the sea.  
To keep it for yourself.  
Hurl words to terrify him:  
The sea gives, and the sea takes.  
You took me from the sea. I'll give the sea a bit of you in return.  
Your boat's drain plug.  
The plug you kept latched with your skeleton keys.  
So you'd never forget it.  
I plucked it away with wee webbed hands.  
I hurl the plug into the waves, dive in the opposite direction. The Old Ones trumpet a  
welcome home. My seal husband and daughters surround me with sleek heads. They bark  
in joy. Nearly enough to right a wrong.

*One Act Play*



Eight of *Judy Klass's* full-length plays and 37 of her one-acts have been produced onstage. Two of her full-lengths and six one-acts have been produced as podcasts. Her full-length play *Cell* was nominated for an Edgar, and published by Samuel French/Concord. Her full-length *Country Fried Murder* won the S.O.P.S. competition, was produced onstage at Shawnee Playhouse in 2019 – and virtually by Quarantine Players in 2021. Three of her short plays are published by Brooklyn Publishers, each as a stand-alone script. Her short plays have appeared in *Seven Hills Review*, *Ponder Review*, *The Courtship of Winds*, and in anthologies like *The Art of the One-Act* and *The Best New Ten-Minute Plays 2021*.

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/judy.klass.1>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/judy-klass-67148126/>

NPX: <https://newplayexchange.org/users/5340/judy-klass>

Her book on Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08XX4ZZ7H/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08XX4ZZ7H/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1)

website: [www.judyklass.com](http://www.judyklass.com)

# Untethered

## A Play in One Act

*by Judy Klass*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS:

**JESSICA:** Twenties to thirties. Sarcastic and laid back, but capable of being serious and caring.

**HALEY:** Around the same age as JESSICA, in a state of shock, despair and great pain. SHE may be gasping for air, or shaking, or forcing herself consciously to say each word in a normal voice, or constantly fighting back tears, at the start of the play.

### SETTING:

JESSICA's apartment: a space with a couch and a chair.

JESSICA'S APARTMENT: Not a fancy space. There is a chair and a couch. HALEY sits, upset, trying to get hold of herself. Her things are in an overnight bag. JESSICA brings her a glass of water from the kitchen, off-stage.

JESSICA

So, it's from the Brita filter. It's kind of room temperature.

HALEY

That's fine.

JESSICA

Sorry -- I don't have ice, I don't really do the ice cube thing --

HALEY

(taking the glass)

This is perfect, thanks.

(SHE sips from it.)

JESSICA

I'm not into coffee, either -- you remember from college. There are a couple of Diet Cokes in the fridge, and about half a bottle of red wine...

HALEY

This is -- exactly what I needed. Just a glass of water.

JESSICA

(sits also)

Okay, great.

HALEY

Jessica, thank you. So much.

JESSICA

For what?

HALEY

For taking my call.

JESSICA

Oh, come on. Are you kidding?

HALEY

For saying I could come over. For acting like a friend to me when I have been such a rotten, stinking, lousy excuse for a friend to you!

JESSICA

Please. Forget about it. Just relax. It's good to see you.

HALEY

It was -- really good to hear your voice on the phone. It was like the first normal ... soothing thing that happened, all day.

JESSICA

Well, not many people find my voice all that soothing. But hey, I'm glad.

HALEY

And even having you being sarcastic, making wisecracks ... I've missed that. Just hanging out with friends. Being silly.

JESSICA

Well, what can I say, these are the jokes. I'm here all week. Try the veal.

(indicating the water)

You want more?

HALEY

No, this is ... I'm good. I mean, I'm not good, I'm awful, I've just been run over by a truck, I'm dangling off of a cliff by a string, and the string is coming apart ... but I don't need more water.

JESSICA

You want to talk about it? Walk me through what happened, or ...

HALEY

Sure, why not. I was ... Steve was in the shower. He'd left his phone on the table, and it began to vibrate. He leaves it unlocked. I picked it up. I wasn't -- I'm not a snoop. I'm not generally someone who pries into his life, I hate that kind of person, I don't want to be that. But he'd been away so much, lately. When I moved in with him, I told him I have a problem with his apartment being on the first floor, with those big front windows, there's a lot of crime in the neighborhood, it didn't feel safe to me. And when he's away overnight, or he comes home at two a.m., and he doesn't call --

JESSICA

He does that to you a lot?

HALEY

Look, he's a creative person, he's on a team of writers, they get a lot of money for what they do, sometimes they have re-writes, meetings at weird hours --

JESSICA

Two a.m.?

HALEY

I'm saying I didn't want to be that kind of shrill harpy giving him the third degree, saying where have you been, why don't you have a nine-to-five job --

JESSICA

Shrill harpy? Is that something he calls you?

HALEY

I'm *saying*, I don't want to cling to him and monitor his movements. But he's just been away so much ... I picked up the phone. And I read the text. The newest one. And then a whole series of obscene texts from this woman, I recognized the name, she's someone he works with, I've tried to talk to her at parties, she asked me for a recipe once ... Those texts made it very clear not only that they're -- having an affair, but that it's an ongoing thing, like, not something new ... and when he got out of the shower, I lost it.

JESSICA

Okay.

HALEY

But I mean, I "lost it" in every sense. I lost my dignity. I lost my sense of proportion. I lost my ability to hear him, and talk to him. And I lost my relationship. I threw it all away by freaking out at him!

JESSICA

Why are you angry at yourself for getting angry that this scum bag was cheating on you?

HALEY

Because sure, I had a right to be angry, but we could have gotten past this ... maybe we still can, or we could have if I didn't ... I was just so bitter, and nasty, accusing him. He told me how I'd reduced our relationship to dirt, I'd thrown it away, I was a snoop, I was a 1950s housewife, I disgusted him, he didn't even recognize who I'd become --

JESSICA

Again. He's a dog, he's sleeping around. Sounds like maybe he wanted to get caught, like he set the whole thing up.

HALEY

But we can get to someplace better! Or we could have, if I didn't --

JESSICA

Haley. Listen to yourself. What's happened to you? You used to be ...

HALEY

(sobbing)

I know, I don't care, I love him, I can't lose him, that's all that matters. That's all that matters to me. I don't want movement slogans, or a pep talk on what I "owe myself" as a woman. That's worthless! There's me and Steve, or else there's nothing, there's nothing else that matters.

JESSICA

But if you'd just take a step back --

HALEY

(agitated)

No! I don't want to hear it! Keep it to yourself, choke on it, go empower yourself, leave me alone! I'm like an amputee, my arm's been ripped off, don't tell me to "take a step back."

JESSICA

Okay, then.

HALEY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry to shout at you. That's wrong. I'm untethered.

JESSICA

Untethered?

HALEY

I mean I'm funny in the head. I'm not quite right. I'm whatever you call it. Unhinged. I'm not functioning, right now. This can't be happening, except it's happening, and I'm living in a nightmare and I'm -- not behaving properly.

JESSICA

Don't sweat it. But I'm going to go get some red wine, if that's okay.

(gets up and heads OFF)

Sure you don't want a glass?

HALEY

No, thanks. Steve and I don't –

JESSICA (OFF STAGE)

He doesn't drink, I know. But you used to drink with the best of 'em.

HALEY

I said I'm fine with water. Thanks.

(JESSICA RETURNS, carrying a bottle of red wine.)

JESSICA

Well, if I'm drinking alone, then, why bother with a glass? I'll just swig.

(SHE sits.)

HALEY

You think I'm ridiculous.

JESSICA

Actually, no. You remind me of me.

HALEY

When have I ever reminded you of you?

JESSICA

You remind me of me during the two years I lived in Europe. So, we didn't have a lot of contact during that time. But I fell in love with this guy. Guillermo, his name was. He had a lot of money. We traveled around, from city to city. We stayed in hotels. We rented an apartment in Rome for awhile. This guy -- was so hot. And so funny. The best sex I've ever had, before or since. Don't think I don't consider that stuff important. We had a fight over something stupid, early on. He turned cold, he said he was cutting me out of his life. I was terrified! I thought I'd lost him. It destroyed me. And then, he relented. He took me back. It was like the sun came out after a horrible storm.

HALEY

You're saying you think Steve's going to take me back?

JESSICA

And we never really talked it out, he just acted like nothing had happened. Smiling, joking with me, being affectionate. I put it out of my mind. I figured I'd live my whole life as an expat. Wherever Guillermo wanted to go. I'd have his kids, I'd build my life around him. And then he dumped me, for good. It was quick, surgical, unexpected. He

turned cold again, and this time it didn't change. And I got wimpy, and pleading, and threw away my pride, and he was cutting, and vicious, and he ended all contact ... And it was like I couldn't breathe. It was like my life was over.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

There was no *point*, without Guillermo. Nothing made sense. Nothing was worth anything. There was no place in the world where I belonged.

HALEY

(sarcastic)

And now you're going to tell me how you moved on, and found new love, and a rich, fulfilling --

JESSICA

No. I wish I could tell you that, but no. Never sex that good again, like I said. Very few relationships that came close, in terms of somebody smart, and interesting, who seemed that unusual and special. And that was the only time I lived with someone. The day-today routine, the sleepy comfort of it, being able to say "Hi, honey, I'm home," and feeling like I *was* home, in an alien city ... I haven't had anything like that.

HALEY

(more sarcasm)

Well, thank you, Jessica, for that uplifting story. That was really inspiring. That really gives me hope in a moment of darkness.

JESSICA

Well, you said you didn't want a pep talk.

HALEY

Oh, go to hell!

JESSICA

But. But. Over time, I realized that the intensity of it, the way I imprinted on him like a baby duck -- maybe wasn't good for me. And I was able, over time, to get a little distance. And admit that he fought dirty, in some ways. And used me. And I pretended not to notice. I made myself over to be what he wanted. And I lost sight of who I was.

HALEY

And if he called you up right now? You wouldn't get back with him?

JESSICA

I don't ...

(considers)

Huh. For years afterward, yeah, I would have. Knowing he was a douche. Knowing the trust wasn't there, and he'd use me and discard me again. Now ... I don't think I would.

HALEY

You're lying. For yourself, and for me.

JESSICA

(swigs from the bottle, shakes her head no)

I don't think I am. And I've got a big mouth. I'd call him on his crap now. I'd want to talk through everything that happened. And Guillermo doesn't do that, he's not willing to talk things out, honestly, in any language. I understand his M.O., and so being home with him - - wouldn't feel like home anymore. I don't even think the sex would be as good.

HALEY

So, you're saying I should just learn to feel good about being lonely and miserable. That's the new normal.

JESSICA

Not exactly. I'm saying this feeling like you can't breathe, like there's no point to your life without him ... some of that will get better. You'll get distance, you'll --

HALEY

And there's still a chance he could want me back!

JESSICA

Sure. But I wouldn't plan around it. And I say that as someone who blew months and years planning around that kind of thing. You're secretly thinking you'll plan around it and not let me know, and that's fine. But try thinking that a watched pot never boils. So, you won't watch the pot. You'll remember when you used to write. Do you still write?

HALEY

I haven't been.

JESSICA

For how long? Since you've been with him?

HALEY

I don't want Steve to think I'm using him to build a writing career. I had these amateur projects, so what.

JESSICA

Well, I've seen the webisodes you used to make. I even had a cameo in one of them, if you recall. I thought they were smart, and funny, and I liked the relationships between women in them. They rang true.

HALEY

Well, a lot of it was improv.

JESSICA

Okay, but still, you have an ear for dialogue, and you set up life-like situations. I've watched his show. When you first got together with him, I was happy for you, I wanted

you to find a good guy, I wanted us all to be friends. I *tried* to like the show. I tried so hard I almost herniated something. I don't like his scripts. I don't like the characters.

HALEY

Well, you've got to understand --

JESSICA

Do you like them?

HALEY

It's not some underground, alternative thing, there's a way of doing TV --

JESSICA

Why is he writing in the voice of women and girls, and he never gets it right? Why didn't he ever ask you what you'd say, or how you'd handle a situation?

HALEY

That's now how it works, and I'm not out to exploit our connection --

JESSICA

Why is every strong older woman on that show a bitch? Why are women constantly competing with each other? Why can't they *ever* be friends and take care of each other?

HALEY

Why are you attacking him?

JESSICA

I'm saying, finally, what I honestly think. And I'm asking you what you think. Honestly. Does that show seem like real life to you?

HALEY

It's television.

JESSICA

I didn't think so. So, you don't respect his work, he sabotaged yours, he made you over in various ways, he made you live someplace where you didn't feel safe, he stayed out until two a.m., he screwed around --

HALEY

All right!

JESSICA

And with distance, those things will start to matter. More. And you might even say: good riddance to bad rubbish. That's what I'm saying. And if you don't watch the pot boil, if you re-connect with your friends and start making webisodes again, maybe that will help you stop hurting. 'Cause I'm not the only friend Steve made you lose touch with. Am I. It's a statement, not a question. We do compare notes.

HALEY

You all trash-talk me and Steve?

JESSICA

We worry about you. We don't give a rat's ass about Steve. I've seen him be charming. And he can be theatrically proud of you in public. I've also seen that he can be douche. In subtle ways. Again, it's not just me -- it's Abigail, it's Kayla. He feels threatened by you having old friends from college. Women friends you can joke and be sarcastic with, like you said. Or Craig -- Steve is homophobic or whatever his problem is with your gay friends. And so, he's cut you off from us. And left you with nothing.

HALEY

Not nothing. We go to parties. We meet couples in restaurants. We throw parties sometimes.

JESSICA

Where you talk to this skank who asked you for the recipe. And meanwhile, where are the funny, scruffy people you have a history with, who love you?

HALEY

Look, you guys all like to go out for Asian food, Thai food, that's your favorite.

JESSICA

Yours, too.

HALEY

Well, Steve doesn't like it, and he didn't really hit it off with any of you, and I know I've been bad --

JESSICA

You're not bad. You're in love. But we've met him, we've seen him attack your sense of self in these little ways. And we're your community, we're your peeps, or we used to be, and we felt like we'd lost you to the Hare Krishnas. We didn't know if we'd lost you forever, or if we should stage an intervention, or what. But you're here now. Are you spending the night at my place? This couch contains a fold-out bed, not too bony. I haven't had rave reviews, but people say it's okay. I've got a set of clean sheets.

HALEY

I was going to stay at a hotel.

JESSICA

Well, stay here and save money. And let me call everybody up, and see if they're free. They can come over, and we'll celebrate you becoming untethered. We'll order in some Thai food. And, here, have some red wine.

HALEY

Jessica ...

JESSICA

I know, Steve doesn't drink, and you're secretly planning to go back to him. But if he

takes you back you can write all of us off again, and we won't tell him you had red wine or Thai food. Seriously, take a pull on the bottle, it'll do you good.

(HALEY takes the bottle. JESSICA gets out her cell phone, punches a number.)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And just think, if he doesn't take you back you can wear high heels again, you don't have to worry about how short he is ...

(connects on the phone)

Craig? Hey there, what are you up to? Great news. Haley is a free woman! Either temporarily or permanently. I'm trying to talk her into coming home to us for good.

(listens)

Absolutely. So, come over for dinner, I'm ordering from Lemongrass House. Pad Thai, chicken coconut curry, basil duck ...

(listens)

Yes, an industrial-sized vat of tom yum goong, for everyone, and what else should I get?

HALEY

(swigging from the bottle)

Get that glazed spicy fish.

JESSICA

Absolutely! The crispy fish, with chili and tamarind! And what else?

LIGHTS DOWN

END OF PLAY

# *Short Story*



**Professor ARTURO**, a poet and fiction writer from New Orleans, is a Spoken Word artist, educator, performer, editor and speechwriter. ARTURO, one of the original Broadside poets of the 1960s, has collaborated on a medley of projects with a mélange of artists including painters, musicians, photographers, dancers, singers, fire eaters, waiters, cab drivers, and other members of the Great Miscellaneous. His work has appeared in such diverse publications as *FAHARI*, *the American Poetry Review*, *the Shooting Star Review*, *the Minnesota Review*, *the Gallery Mirror*, *EBONY*, *From a Bend in the River*, *Mesechabe*, *Word Up*, *the Chicory Review*, *the New Laurel Review*, *the New Orleans Tribune*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Chickenbones*, *We Speak As Liberators*, *Black Spirits*, *A Broadside Treasury*, and *Swapping Stories: Folktales From Louisiana*. He is presently teaching at Norwalk Community College in CT.

## Portrait of Aunt Sweet

by Professor ARTURO

The adults just called her “Sweet”. According to Southern tradition we had to call her Aunt Sweet (I still don’t get with that Northern thing with youngsters calling me by my first name). She loved children and was the sweetest of souls. Childless, she was everybody’s child. She was one of those women who put potato salad in her gumbo and sent up daily prayers for those wretched souls consumed by demons. She wasn’t wanna them wimmins with them street feet and she recited the Rosary as often as she could. They said I was a handful when my momma had to work out the house when the three children became five (but she handled my lil’ butt) She was mother confessor to the young girls who fell in lust and “in trouble”. She never swore, drank or frequented bars (Y’all know what kinda woman she was). Childless, she was with one man her entire life. She was one of those women who planted a victory garden and had sweet potato plants in her kitchen window. Her red beans, rice and pecawn candy (the tourists called it “pralines”) were legendary and she never used a recipe or employed a measuring cup. She resembled the lady on the pancake box with the gele. To know her was to love her.

She was a master teacher and her tutorials were a cornucopia of riches. Her teachings were an abundance of erudition. I recall her laughter, wit and wisdom: “Never put good money after bad...Always treat everybody the same...Trust in the Lawd – not people...Don’t do bad—do good...Pray, pray, pray and you’ll find a way...Pay yo’ bills *ahead* o’ time...Hoist yo’ *own* flag...You can sugarcoat doo-doo all you want, but it still won’t be candy...Dance to yo’ own tune – not somebody else...Never eat soup with a fork...Open up yo’ mind – and don’t be blind...Always kick yo’ pride to the side...Never look for love in the daytime with a flashlight...‘Want’ is a four-letter word—a *bad* four-letter word...A blessin’

in the skies can be a blessin' in disguise...Never be draggin' in the streets...Buy the ticket—take the ride... Run up and git done up...Fair exchange ain't no robbery...Use yo' head for something more than a hairstyle...The burned hand teaches the best lesson...Always say your prayers at night...You might not wake up.” She was always rackin' my brains.

Sometimes I didn't know what she went, but she was the greatest of mentors in my tenderest years. Her firm but gentle touch was reassuring while I was suffering a stinging application of Mercurochrome antiseptic (I hated that stuff). She talked to me about pearls and swine. I didn't know what she meant (but I know *now*). I remember the rhythm of her rocking chair lulling me to sleep until it was time for my nap and remember her glow-in-the-dark oversized Rosary beads and her daily prayer (until those cataracts hit her). I recollect cuddling her brown, melon breasts (I always liked that). Everybody wanted to get that rocking chair when she died. Her tenderness and wisdom still sustain my spirit when my flesh is weak.

The corner house on Johnson and Laharpe (Lahopp to the natives) was a classic style Creole cottage connected to four family members next door: Aunt Sweet, Uncle Arthur, Aunt Ruby and her son, Herbert. They never had the obscenity of wealth, nor did they become stratospherically rich, but they were hard working, industrious tax-paying citizens who trusted the newspaper to vouch their limited “choices” and endorsements at election time (We didn't have those alphabet card so prevalent in the black community at this time), but they still voted.

They came from Napoleonville, LA in the early part of the century when Herbert's childhood friend was about to be “in white folks trouble” before he might've been involved with their slave catching constabulary. His friend was threatened by life in prison for robbing a snowball stand for “assault to do bodily harm less than murder”. In that area of Louisiana that meant life in Angola State Prison...or worse.

I remember Uncle Arthur, as a natchal man (who favored seersucker suits and Stacey

Adams platform shoes) footed their bills and ran the mails in the Sixth and Seventh Wards. I used to say they were “Aunt Sweet and Uncle Sour” (when no adults were around of course). Uncle Arthur was a WWI doughboy who smoked either a pipe or White Owl Cigars with boxes that we used for Mardi Gras miniature floats. He worked all his life and wasn’t among the idle rich or a member of Jobs Anonymous. He was a somber man who spoke sparingly. The only time I remember him laughing was when I gave him a mammoth, foot long cigar when I visited them from Houston. In hindsight I remember his doughboy outfit and mail uniform. I was never to even speak about that raggedy .22 caliber gun that he secreted in the chiffarobe.

Aunt Ruby lived half-house to Aunt Sweet. I was based in New York when my first child was born and she and Aunt Sweet gave us a massive dinner with their finest silver- and all the trimmings. New Orleans people used to do that at that time. Again, somebody took what they could take after her solemnities. That’s how family will do. There’s always the one who didn’t do anything who wants it all (Y’all know what I’m talkin’ bout). Aunt Ruby had a hearing concern and you had to say something at least twice or more in order to hear her while she fumbled for her contraption while viewing her wrestling matches on her black and white TV with the colossal dials. She wasn’t into armchair pundits on the network news (ABC, CBS, NBC and the educational station). *I* was the remote control. She just liked her wrestling matches and always sent me for errands to the store (barefoot and shirtless) when I was a pint-sized Lilliputian (children could do that in safety then).

I often relive the times in my youth in that profoundly penetrating home where my baseball comrades and I secured our bikes after riding to Nora Navra Library (the one for the colored citizenry), the pecawn tree in the back yard under tornados of swallows and mosquito hogs (hawks?), Aunt Sweet, and the empowering narrative of her profoundly enlightening soul.

I was in graduate school when the Lord opened His heart to this black, magic woman  
and welcomed an angel to His kingdom.

# *Travelogue*



**Sharon Baker** is author of guidebooks on Florida, Trinidad, Santa Fe, Seoul, and Chicago. Her play, *“Love and Death in Eden, Australia”* debuted in Miami, July 2019. Her play, *“Birthday Party at the Dalai Lama’s Palace,”* was presented on ZOOM in 2021, by the Dramatists Guild of America. She writes magazine articles and plays, and paints wildlife scenes in Bluffton, SC, inspired by her golfer husband Kenny, and cat Ginger.

# Jungle Eyes

*by Sharon Baker*

All eyes are on Marino Chacon.

Slowly, patiently, our enthusiastic guide scans Costa Rica's emerald jungle. Excitedly, he points up.

"Sharon!" he calls. "I promised you a sloth today. See her?"

On that branch! Carrying her baby."

Yes. Yes. Above us, camouflaged in the cecropia tree, a smiling sloth stretches languidly, plucking a leafy breakfast for her child.

Watching a sloth family up close in the wild: my dream come true.

"Sloths spend their entire lives in cecropia trees," Mario explains. "They eat, sleep, mate, and keep their babies safe from predators. They climb down only once a week to pee and poop," he laughs.

Funny guy, our Mario. Entertaining, and encyclopedic on Costa Rica's flora, fauna, history, geography and culture. Mario is certified as a naturalist guide by Las Quebradas Biological Center Foundation, and is an active environmentalist helping to develop Los Quetzales National Park.

During our eleven-day adventure, we travel Costa Rica coast to coast, visiting San Jose, Tortuguero, Sarapiquí, Arenal Volcano, Punta Leona, and San Gerardo de Dota. We learn to silently, slowly amble: listening to rainforest and river music.

Paradise teems with birds, reptiles, mammals and insects. Rain soaks us daily. Who cares?

Our Jungle Eyes get sharper every day. Look at those

White Throated Capuchin monkeys, swinging branch to branch, like Cirque du Soleil acrobats! Are those 15-foot, 800 pound crocodiles going to jump in our Rio Grande Tarcoles riverboat? We photograph day-glow blue poison dart frogs and fierce-faced green iguanas. We marvel as long lines of leaf cutter ants march over bridges and boulders, delivering leaf slivers to their Queen.

One amazing morning, scaredy cat me spots a boa constrictor slithering under a log. I don't die. Emboldened, I gaze, unafraid, at palm sized spiders on surreally lovely webs

And an orange eyelash pit viper boasting.

On another walk, our entire groups gasps, noticing a poisonous Fer-de-Lance snake sleeping happily on our trail. I lived to tell the tale.

Although Costa Rica is only 19,700 square miles, the country is home to about 5% of species found on Planet Earth. Imagine: over 8,500 plant species, 220 reptile species, 160 amphibian species, 205 mammal species, and 850 species of birds. Passionate about creatures great and small? You'll find them here.

After nonstop exploration of jungles, rivers, volcanoes, mountains, farms and a thrilling high in the sky walk at Mistico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park, it's time for our Jungle Eyes Test.

On a dark starlit night, riverboats ferry us onto Tortuguero Beach.

"Welcome," says the Park Ranger. "This is the nesting site of the largest population of sea turtles in the Caribbean," she says. "We protect twenty two miles of nests on this beach."

“Will we see them laying eggs tonight?” I ask.

“Perhaps,” she smiles. “I will go and check on the turtles.”

“Prepare for a Miracle,” Mario grins.

After a long hour, the Park Ranger returns. In the dim glow of her red flashlight, so as not to scare the turtles, we follow, holding hands like curious kindergartners. Hearts pound louder than the ocean shimmering in moonlight.

“Here,” whispers Mario. “She’s here. At your feet.”

A mamma green sea turtle grunts, whooshing away sand, creating a deep hole. Plop. One perfect sea turtle egg. Plop. Plop. Hundreds of eggs. Future sea turtles, hoping to hatch and survive against cruel odds of life and death.

“She’s returned to the beach where she herself was born,” Mario says. “Swimming miles in the ocean, how does she find it again? That’s the Miracle.”

We understand now why Costa Rica is so special. This country is devoted to preserving and conserving the Nature they revere. Everyone greets us with “PURA VIDA!”

Live The Pure Life, Costa Ricans say: Live life fully, as happily as possible. Take care of all you love. Be grateful for our magnificent fragile Planet Earth.

As the exhausted sea turtle lumbers arduously into the ocean’s swell, she looks back at us. We wave farewell. I’m not the only one wiping away tears.

“Do you see her saying goodbye?” Mario asks.

Serenaded by the ocean’s call to the wild, we see.

Our Jungle Eyes see.

# *Book Review*



*Dianne Moritz* writes in all genres, but is primarily a children's poet and picture book writer. Her fifth book, *GOING ON A GHOST HUNT*, will be out in fall 2022. Her page on amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Dianne-Moritz/e/B00DX02IAY>

## **Bodies and Words**

**Assure Press, 70 pg.**

*A review by Dianne Moritz*

**assurepress.org**

Celia Lisset Alvarez's latest poetry book, *BODIES AND WORDS*, is a collection of narrative free verse whose title is inspired by a quote from Joyce Carol Oates: "In love there are two things - bodies and words." Ms. Alvarez, a Cuban American now living in Miami, explores the myriad facets of love, relationships, and human behavior, writing with passion

and wit, spiced with references to her Cuban heritage:

I heard you tell the joke about how many Cubans it takes to fill an island and I thought it takes one, just one. ("How to Make a Mojito")

What's a good place to get Cuban food? Beat The Crowd And Instantly Reserve A Table At 50,000+ Local Restaurants! ("The Internet Answers His Questions")

These men now...They surprise me, suddenly alive, grabbing their crotches, yelling obscenities at me they think I can't understand. ("Hunger")

Her work is filled with unique and colorful imagery: "My heart felt gripped tight to my ribcage like a starfish." ("Climbing the Lighthouse") In "Coleoptera" she writes..."...you were master, might as well have worn a pompadour and stockings and had me trail behind you with your toilet and tea." In "Seduction," the reader feels her post-coital afterglow... "...I flattened out the sheets....where the truest parts of ourselves had spoken."

Ms. Alvarez is an accomplished poet, with two published chapbooks, *Shapeshifting* (winner of the 2005 Spire Press Poetry Award) and *The Stones* (Finishing Line Press 2006).

*BODY & WORDS*, her second published collection, is a book of powerful, evocative poems, infused with pathos and humor.

*Upcoming  
book*

## A Playbill for Sunset

by Dan Champion



## *A Playbill for Sunset* Dan Champion

The poems in *A Playbill for Sunset* consider elements of drama in the natural world, elements of wild nature in the theater of human affairs, and scenes in which the elements mingle like playgoers in the foyer. The arc of the book traces a year through its seasons. The speakers of its poems have their say, in their various styles, about folktales and found art, sunsets and submarines, afghans and archaeology. Rooted in the American Midwest prairie, where the sunsets are long and often spectacular, the poems range across cultural space and time, seeking to enact a free play of ideas and emotions within the structures of poetic forms.

The book will be available this summer. For details please visit:  
<https://icecubepress.com/2021/10/01/a-playbill-for-sunset/>



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# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We are open for submissions. We invite poems, short stories, essays, plays, diaries, excerpts from books (published or upcoming submitted by author only), book reviews, interviews and travelogues. Please send all submissions to [freshwordsmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:freshwordsmagazine@gmail.com) as per the following guidelines:

## Poetry:

1. 3 to 4 poems (all themes and forms).

## Short Stories:

2. Maximum 2 stories
3. Word limit for each story (maximum 1500 words)

## Essays:

4. Topic must be literary.
5. Maximum 2 essays
6. Word limit for each essay (maximum 1500 words)
7. Send a summary of the work

## Plays:

8. Maximum 2 submissions.
9. You can send one-act play or full length play
10. Send a summary of the work

## Diaries:

11. You can send parts of your daily diaries and your observations about life
12. Maximum word limit 2000 words.

## Excerpts from books:

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1. You can send a chapter or a few pages of your novel
2. You can send an act (in case of full length play) or a few pages of your one act play
3. You can send maximum 3 poems of your poetry book
4. A note about the publisher and website from where it will be available

### For Already Published Books:

5. You can send a chapter or a few pages of your novel
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8. Website link from where it can be purchased or downloaded

### Book Reviews:

13. Two book reviews at a time
14. Book review must mention (on the top right hand corner)the name of publisher, total pages of book, weblink of book or website of publisher

### Interviews:

15. The interested author/s may send an email to us with detailed literary achievements for consideration of an e-interview.
16. In case you have already interviewed, please send the questions and answers typed in MS Word Doc.

### Travelogues:

1. Share your travelling experiences with the world
2. maximum word limit 3000 words

3. Donot forget to include your website and social media links at the end of text
4. You may share upto 10 pictures of your travel, in case they are available.

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## General Guidelines:

1. All submissions must contain a cover letter and a short literary profile of author in third person narrative.
2. All submissions must be sent typed in MS Word or PDF doc as attachment with the email.
3. The author should mention:

Legal Name:

Pen name (if any):

Snail mail address:

4. In the Subject line of your submission email please clearly mention the category like 'Poetry Submission' or 'Short Story' submission etc.
5. Simultaneous submissions are welcome but please immediately inform us in case they are accepted elsewhere.

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