

# Origins

**An Anthology  
Produced by the Bailey  
Library, the Sustainability  
Literacy Task Force, and  
the WCC Poetry Club**

**Edited by Maryam Barrie  
and Tom Zimmerman**

## **Acknowledgments**

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This *Origins* anthology is a production of the Bailey Library, the Sustainability Literacy Task Force, and WCC Poetry Club, at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan USA.

It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, and alumni that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website in October and November of 2020.

On Tuesday, November 17, in honor of Native American Heritage month, we hosted an *Origins*-themed open mic / Native Poetry Zoom event. This open mic featured readings from work submitted to the *Origins* anthology as well as readings from an online “basket” of poems by Native poets (mostly from the Americas).

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# ALEX ARZOOYAN

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## Am I My Own Muse?

I wake up everyday humbled that I am just a person.

I don't want to be just a person; I want to be a woman with life's answers. I want to contain Galaxies.

I was born when the Moon was New; hidden from Her glory—a cosmic irony.

Only the Ocean shows no difference in Her absence, spring tides roar through the night, defiant and unruly as ever. I lie awake at night, wondering: who does the Ocean love more? The Moon whose loyalty is unwavering, or the shore they try so hard to kiss?

I have so many questions for someone who has lived so much and so little. New Moon's bring new beginnings with a vengeance and can only be harnessed by the most wild witches of old.

I was born when the Moon was New, but I don't want to stay hidden. I want to shine so brightly that I'm mistaken for the Sun.

I've died many times in this life, fallen to chaos once or twice.

I still have so many questions for someone who's survived it all.

Is it our hearts or our brains that make it so that we can love people so deeply?

Why can I fall in love with a gentle touch, but never be inspired by it?

Why can I love someone until the end of the Earth, but hate them even more if they betray me?

Always trustworthy, why do I never trust anyone as much as my own shadow?

Why do lonely people try the hardest to keep others away?

Why do I feel like older isn't wiser, and the minds of children truly do have all of life's answers?

Where do we go when we fall asleep? Where do we go when the Moon is Full?

I was born when the Moon was New, and I still don't understand if the

tides are in mourning when she's hidden, or don't notice, but still roar their loyalty to Her anyway.

I was born on a New Moon; and no, the irony doesn't escape me. I am humbled daily that I am only a person, but I am trying to be more hopeful. I am becoming a woman who contains galaxies.



# MARYAM BARRIE

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## Corona Virus Zoom Family Chat

Zoom family chat replaces having people over for pancakes, means we are all in different locations. I am not even in the same room with my husband, because of sound backwash and echo. My daughter Morgan and son-in-law, Evan, are in Menomonie, Wisconsin. My sister Sophia and her husband Dave are in their Arts and Crafts Sears house on Hawks. My brother Khalid and his wife Lisa, are on Gott Street. Jasper, my nephew, Amanda, his fiancé, and Lucie, my niece, are on the road, in an SUV, coming back from Wilderness State Park. My mother is downstairs at the dining room table. I see starkly on screen that she is fading. She is less than she was. She is getting ready to leave her complicated children.

Morgan makes her background Aurora Borealis, then palm trees on a beach. Sophia smiles even though her Corona escape drive to see water was a trip past four landfills, with the twin chimneys of the Monroe nuclear power plant on the horizon. Lake Erie is just east of there, but when she and Dave approach a lakeside parking lot, a dozen men in camouflage are eating Little Caesar's pizza with their beer. They are celebrating, which seems the opposite of shelter in place.

My daughter, Rowan, is on the phone in the hall. She is not asleep to subtext. This is a family of outsiders – tricky blood ties and memories of a fractured chaos. A need to have space from each other.  
*How are you coping with the pandemic?*

Lisa wins—she knows people who have had loved ones die.  
I am in my little bubble, reading. I sit at the computer,  
then read with my feet above my heart to ease their swelling.

Long ago, I was drastic with baby fever.  
I won—I got to have two babies, watch them  
grow and change. They are now women.  
They said and did delightful things that I rewind  
and play regularly. I miss being essential,  
though I am glad to have my hands free.  
My memories have filtered the past. I don't think  
of the nights without sleep, the girls who would  
not pick up their toys, the perpetually messy house.  
I don't think about being the one who did the bills,  
who created whatever sort of order was on offer.  
I filter out crumbling under that weight,  
finding refuge in multiple pneumonias and surgeries.  
I hardly remember driving home to them from late  
night graduate school after a full day of teaching thinking,  
*it would be so easy to swerve and drive into those trees.*

Everyone on this Zoom has faced the darkness,  
though we slide and skitter on the surface today.  
Most of us are well medicated.  
Moments of the past bleed through each shared reference.  
Even on Zoom, much of our communication is silent.  
I catch my brother's eye the one time our mother  
speaks. She looks small and worn, hunched over  
the computer, happy to watch us and listen to the chat.  
Attentive and silent, she watches the conversational ball  
bounce back and forth, between her children,  
their children and assorted partners. She observes  
from a distance, the same distance she always has.  
Her absence will be the absence we will miss.

# MARYAM BARRIE

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## The Central Game in Heaven

Reading can be a word-treat mélange  
of synchronicity swirled with impulse  
and centering control. Skilled word-smithery  
turns me back to a time when such play  
was the central game in heaven. On those fields,  
a book I read many times in childhood,  
*The Secret Pencil*. An automatic writing tool  
brought word from the other side.  
It knew secrets, gave clues, made jokes—  
all the feats of language that lead to other knowings.  
And now I use keyboards to get to that raw clay—  
trying to tap, tap, tap my way into a surprise.

My own secrets have their clues in the after fog  
of early morning waking. For once,  
my body is comfortable, enjoys the sensuous stretch  
of warm toes slipping into the cool cave of sheet satisfaction.  
My back unhinges from its own weight,  
and from my toes through my shoulder  
blades, everything in me arches in pleasure.  
I am the only one awake in the house.  
The light has not yet filtered through the woods into the windows.  
What sub-rosa gleaning is shuffling my way?  
And where will I be when the words stop?  
And who will I be then?



# MARYAM BARRIE

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## Parental Units

I could have burned the letters  
I saved from him, but I just slipped  
their thin onionskin sheets into the  
recycling. Where is that long lost  
father, tolling that doomsday bell?  
A small absence in me aches,  
but there are no father-sized  
holes where a life should be.  
And the underworld of the mother  
who could not mother is well below  
the surface too. In the fullness  
of my days, she is only a small  
whirl of chaos, threatening no one.  
In the spiral of that wind,  
I am battened down and secure—  
everything in me is listening.

# MARYAM BARRIE

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## Ghost Lands

I was driving with a fever on a road  
I have driven on for forty-five years,  
a road I used to play chicken on with myself,  
barreling as fast as I could in the dark, headlights off.

That land is no longer trees and marsh,  
has grown many large rectangular houses,  
thick with their own importance and grandeur.  
As a dirt road it was my haven, though I was burning  
oil to get there to watch the herons and red-winged  
blackbirds flare up in swoops at the sound of the car.  
There was one house, tucked into the trees,  
massive oaks and maples by the road -  
willows at either side of the house where the waters pooled.  
The trees braided themselves together over the road  
and for several hundred feet there was a tunneled arbor.  
I drove there just to slowly pass through those shadows, which are now ghosts.

This is Michigan, so our kind have been building houses here for scarcely  
three hundred years. I was seeing ghosts from before then,  
could feel their lovely bulk hovering above the earth.  
I've only seen a human ghost once, but have heard them more often,  
whispering comfort in my ear. These ghosts wanted only to be remembered.  
They were once swaying, rooted in this world.

As a girl at sleepovers, I'd be one of nine girls in the dark.  
I'd give tarot readings. With only our pointer fingers underneath  
one girl's body, we'd take turns lifting each other slowly into the air.  
In the seances I led, we'd recite the Lord's Prayer for protection,  
then work to channel what could come, usually someone's grandmother.  
Twice it was Paul McCartney, who we worried was dead. He wasn't,

but that didn't stop Laura from swaying dangerously and garbling messages about isolation and betrayal.

A few years later, I almost became a ghost myself, hurtling towards the trees I loved. I don't know if it is their memories of life or my longing for them that I see, but I can almost hear their roots soaking up the dark food of earth, the water that was everywhere then. I remember their thick bodies reaching up to the sky, the interlacing of their limbs and leaves. To be a ghost is simple—love this world enough to waver at leaving it.



# OLIVIA BOTTUM

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## 2019: The International Year of the Periodic Table of the Elements

I was forty years old. I had finished three years of math classes at Washtenaw Community College at night school to get ready to transfer to the University of Michigan and study science. It was my first semester back at University of Michigan after over 10 years away. I was taking biology, physics, and chemistry for the first time. Suddenly an important connection happened in my brain and I was excited. “Dad! Everything that happens in the world is due to the movement of electrons!” Dad, ever supportive and enthusiastic, said, “Wow! How are we going to get this word out?”

150 years ago, Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev had a dream. In it, he saw the connections between atoms that led him to design the periodic table of the elements. The elements form a pattern based on their atomic mass and the electrons they have to contribute to other atoms.

The human body is made up mainly of oxygen, carbon, hydrogen and nitrogen. Within me, chemical reactions are taking place all the time. Within a dandelion, tree, beetle, my cat, my best friend, it's all chemical reactions. How could I think I am separate from this world? There is in reality no invisible wall between me and the world. No, I am made up of the same molecules, using the same oxygen and carbon as everything I see. I am part of everything on the deepest level possible. We all share the atomic world. Hello, world. I see you now.

# **MONICA CIALEK**

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## **When Next Begins**

**When the child is born  
And the first sacrifice is made**

**When bent is not broken  
And bends even further**

**When the time before and the time after  
Is blurred history**

**When the next time it happens  
Is history repeating**

**When the next one who sees it  
Knows it's always been there**

**When the next thing  
Becomes the best thing**

**When the next year  
Ends in a zero**

# **NOAH ENGLEHART**

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## When the Night Returns

On a cold winter night so dark and dim.  
The sun sets leaving the world lost and grim.  
We fear the ones who fly above us in the sky.  
But they are the ones who keep our time passing by.

They roar their roar of might and fury,  
and they send the ground people running in a hurry.  
They sing in the night their sacred songs.  
They'll sing every one of them, all night long.  
But late one night you'll see in a dream,  
These foul beasts are not what they seem.

They created our sun with their burning fires.  
They grabbed the ground, to rise the mountains higher.  
They planted the trees of the world's oldest groves.  
They filled the beaches with water and sand across every cove.  
They planted the meadows with every single flower.  
And brought upon the world its very first hour.  
They gave us our world, that we lose every day.  
All because we had to chase them away.  
And when our age of freedom had finally begun.  
It was only then we realised what we had done.

We had no purpose left in sight.  
So we all began to fight.  
And when new creatures had come to save us.  
We pushed them all away in fear that they were dangerous.  
We built our walls to keep out intruders.  
While we gave fools our power and called them rulers.  
We drove away the white wolves of the north.  
And broke our oaths of peace that we had put forth.  
The summer sun has hid away.

**And the magic we once had didn't want to stay.  
The trees, the flowers, the grass had begun to die.  
And the sky turned grey as it began to cry.  
We pulled the snow off the mountain peaks.  
And soon our world began to look very bleak.**

**So when the night returns and we keep our heads held high.  
We will not run, we will not fight, when they return to rule the sky  
And when they finally return with all their might.  
The dragons we once feared will once again protect us, when they return in  
the night.**



# CORNELIUS FORTUNE

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## The Future of Man

we've tripped along in the  
dark, touching atoms  
(crashing)  
into one another,  
discovering the  
thermodynamic nature  
of self, a hot core  
boiling over,  
making the hard climb  
upwards against nature  
then sideways across the  
mystery of inner-self

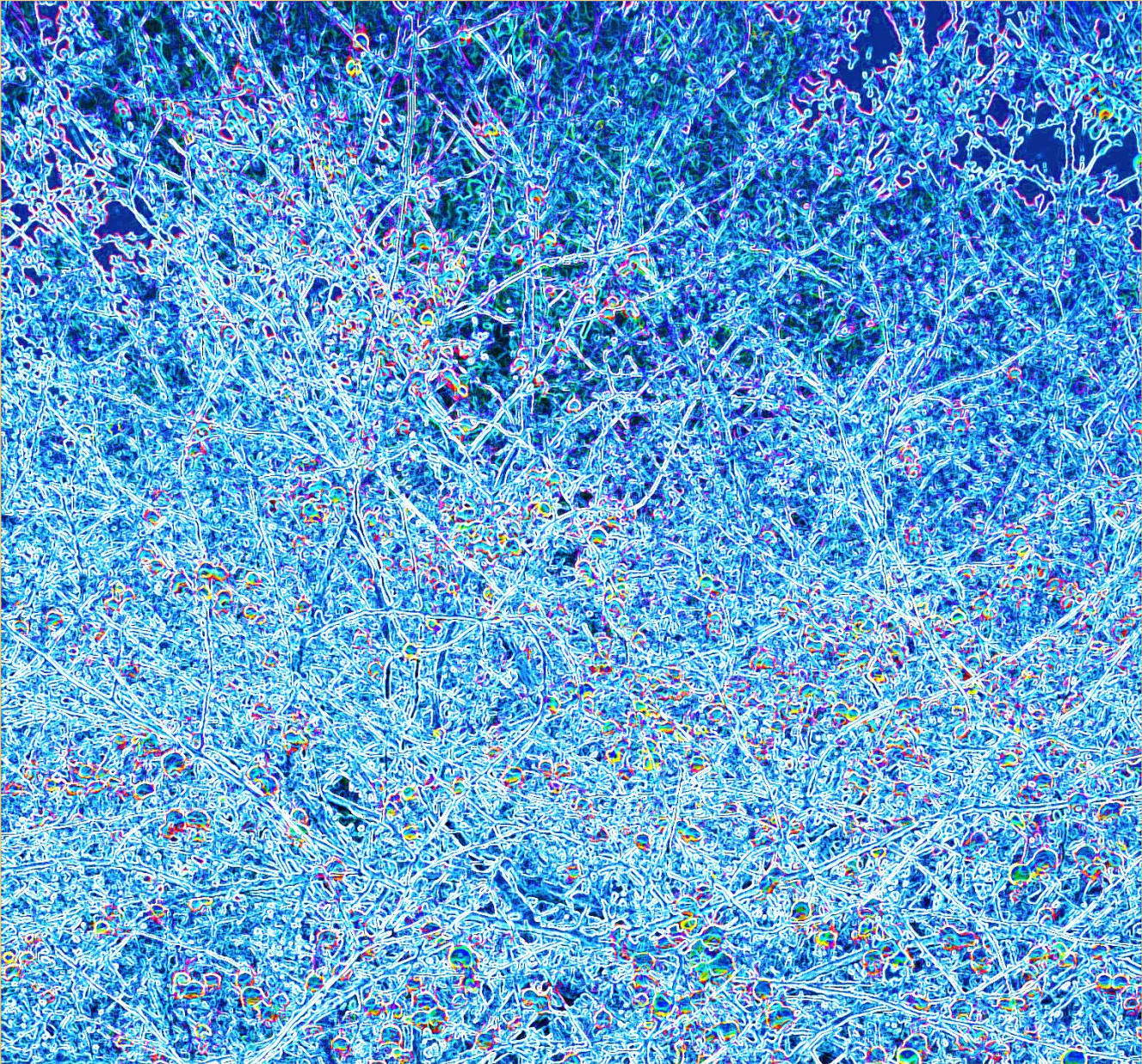
a billion neurons,  
a billion stars,  
tipped at exactly  
the right angle

all good stories come  
to an end, and ours  
will slow to ice,  
the sun dimming,  
slipping from us  
as dreams deferred  
to the harsh light  
of reality's lament

another great migration:  
taking our arts, culture,  
and sports teams with us



and we'll have to cross  
over into a multiverse,  
a dark obsidian glass  
half full, parted wide  
for our eventual arrival



# CORNELIUS FORTUNE

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## Kissed by the Polar Vortex

the furnace clicks to life  
which marks the prelude  
of your coming

and the house groans  
with an arthritic sigh

you're not destructive like a tornado,  
an earthquake, or a tsunami, but you  
destroy things in tiny moments stretched  
out and culminating –  
in some extreme cases  
you have even stopped hearts,  
disturbing the complex rhythm of life

you snarl traffic and French kiss  
the roads,  
engaging in an erotic dance  
that leaves  
slippery slopes  
frozen for a time

objects get jackknifed especially for you  
like a highway sacrifice;  
the altar crackles  
below degrees  
(always the charmer)  
within minutes  
you make people blush without really trying,  
leaving hands deathly cold,  
and the cars in driveways  
immobile from your touch

**everything tastes different when you touch it,  
even the air**

**you're just too damn cold for words,  
so you kiss everything else to stay warm**

**you're unexpected,  
uninvited,  
underappreciated,  
positively negative  
and irrevocably, chill**



# AMY HIGGINS

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1975

was the year *psychobabble* and *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* both made the pages of *Merriam Webster's Dictionary* and my dad re-married.

My new word that summer in the new backyard of our new two-story house was *hammock*— it had give, it made room for me. At nine, I could pull it around me like a cocoon and go slack. I was invisible when my dad kicked words like sand in her eyes,

*You know who the problem is? You're the problem.  
I'm sick of your psychobabble!  
Put a sock in it, will ya?*

They had shut the door to the new screened-in porch, so my brother and I wouldn't hear.

(But I heard, in my cocoon)

*What am I—your drudge, your babysitter?  
I know why you married me, I'm no idiot.  
Those kids don't even know how to make a bed;  
she never taught them, and now it's my job?*

I learned cognitive behavior therapy three decades after the summer I became a stepchild. Delicate tool I use to reshape

my warped lens and see true,  
it fits my mind  
like a felt tip pen fits my hand—  
it has give, it makes room for me.  
My own hands lead me into the light,  
my own voice calls me *daughter*.



# AMY HIGGINS

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## Words I Was Raised On

I threw the kite down and tried out Dad's  
phrase—*What a jip!*—  
on the heap of ripped plastic  
that fluttered like a broken bird, then heaved  
and went still.

*Jip!* spit itself out, served that cheap toy right  
for letting me down.

Years later, I learned it was *gyp*  
as in *gypsy*. My face burns  
with how often I hurled that word.

*What a pansy!*

Dad whispered to me behind his hand.  
I smiled at the idea of man as flower,  
tasted the cruelty on my own tongue.  
Then he called the French teacher I loved  
*Fucking pansy, what a faggot*  
on the way home from Parent Night.  
*But he's nice, and so funny*  
I whispered out the car window,  
under the sound of the whipping wind.

My dad thought he wasn't racist because  
he didn't say things his father used to say.  
I remember how Grandpa used to paw through  
the mixed nuts to find  
one brown, rounded triangle.  
*Have a nigger toe, he'd say,*  
cracking it into my palm.  
The soft white kernel  
tasted like rancid fat. I ran  
and spat it into the toilet.

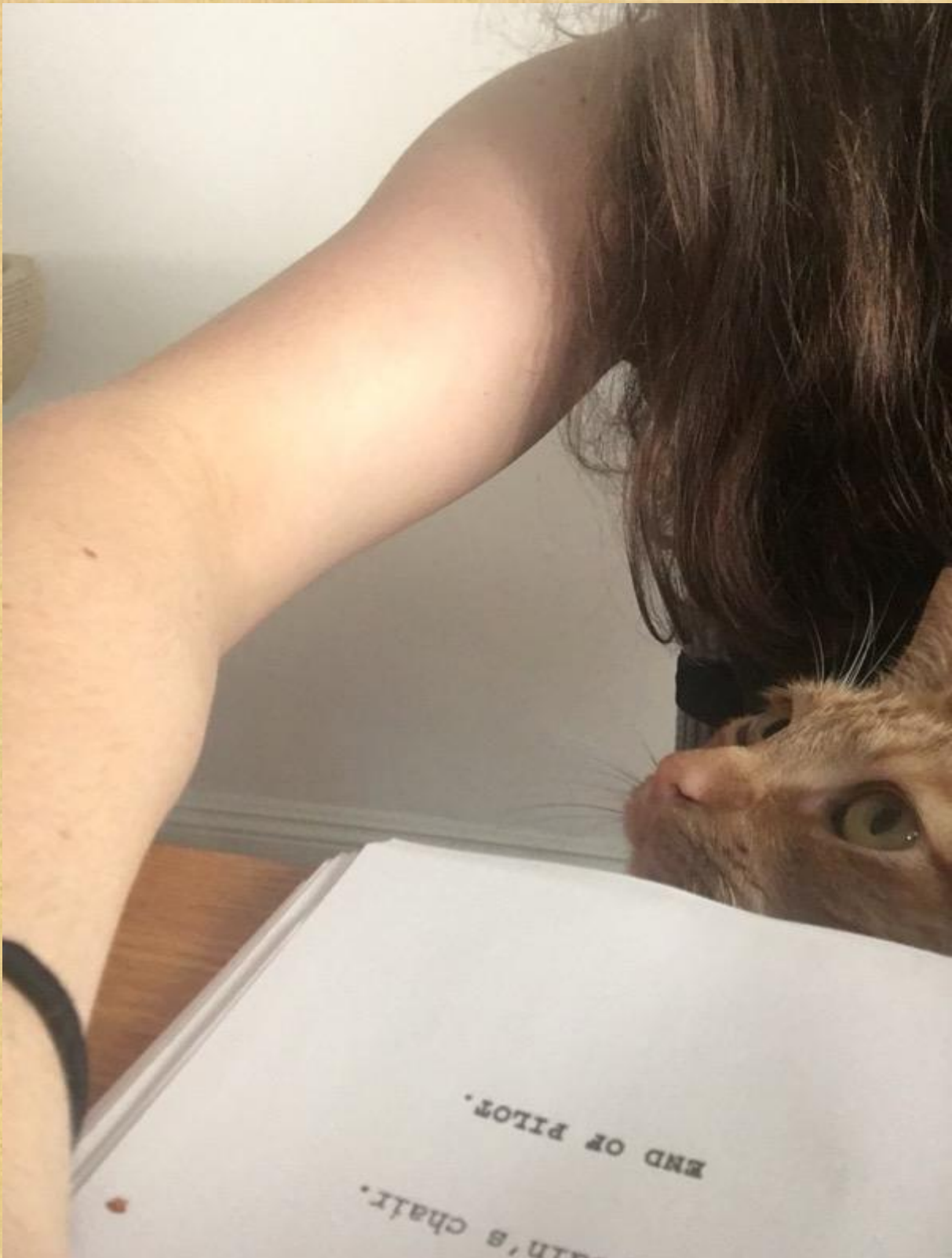
I flushed and sat on the lid  
until the bird in my ribcage grew still.



# CLARE HIGGINS

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## Creator and Muse





# DIANE M. LABODA

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## First Memories

Grandma's kitchen loomed large, larger than life to a 3-year-old. Flames crackled in the wood stove. "Don't touch!" she said. She'd pick me up and say, "Look here," at bubbles rising in a copper pot, exploding into smoke.

The feet on the table frightened me. Something Grandpa said about boogey men and wood gnomes made me wonder if clawed-feet near my ankles meant a monster with a slathering tongue and fierce fangs hid there too. I kept my distance.

The table must be related to the big white bathtub with animal feet that lives upstairs where I get my bath. It's big enough to be a boat and cold enough to freeze my skin off. I didn't trust it either.

Grandma filled two copper tubs with hot water heated on the stove once a week to wash clothes. She'd scrub each piece on the washboard, dip it in clear water to rinse the suds off, ring by hand, shake and roll it up until

they could be hung on the clothesline on the back porch with pinching pins, cousins to the bobby-pins in Grandma's hair, the ones that keep her long thin braid wrapped so neatly out of the way.

An ironing board came down out of the cupboard and stretched long between the counter and table. Dried clothes were tortured flat with the heavy weight of a flatiron, one I could not lift, and was told to never touch.

The new one she wanted, Grandma said, was “lectric” and didn’t need to sit on the stove. It could still burn like a fire, though. I found out what else the fire in the stove could do when we baked oatmeal cookies.

Grandma measured flour, oatmeal and butter into a big pottery bowl which she let me mix together and drop in gobs on big flat pans that went in the oven to “bake.” “Bake” was like magic.

When she said they were done and opened the oven door, I was so amazed I forgot the pot holders and burned my fingers. Grandma put Vaseline on them and kissed them all over.

I loved the solid oak chairs with high backs. Grandma covered the wood seats with cushions she made from old blankets and new cotton prints with flowers. They were good for climbing to get a better view of the magic oven and pig-shaped cookie jar on the counter.

I loved the apron she made for me from the same flower-print material. In the pocket I kept one thing—a note she wrote that said, “Best Baker.”

# DIANE M. LABODA

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## Etymology

Five letters, d-i-a-n-e, round-ish mostly,  
one pointed, one dot.

Parental choices notwithstanding  
(I could have been a “Beryl”)—  
learn to love it, learn to say it with pride—  
Diane, the poet.

Learn to empathize with the dozen or so  
mothers who named their little bundles of joy  
Diane that year. Diane Marie would wait  
decades to make the popular names list.

Learn to forgive the grandmother  
who never learned to spell it—  
crushed every birthday by two n’s.  
Learn to answer the two-year-old toddler  
next door when she slurred it into “Dine.”

Accept that the rebirth of the name  
in the eighties came with a much more  
mellow “a” at the end...and deal with  
the confusion when you work in the same  
office with two other Dianas.

Realize that a name in no way limits  
who you are. You’re given a name  
for one short lifetime,  
not to be lost or reflected in it.  
Look inside the eyes.

Ask the soul who's in there  
and listen for who answers.  
Call the body what you like—  
flighty names like Felicity or Moon,  
or even Beryl.

For now,  
this soul settles gladly into five letters,  
most rounded, one pointed, one dot—  
Diane,  
the poet.



# DIANE M. LABODA

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## Unspoken Names

We rarely have one identifying name when we are born unless the parents are diligent, sonogram carrying, OCD creatures. We just don't pop out looking like an Archibald or Sebastian. We don't.

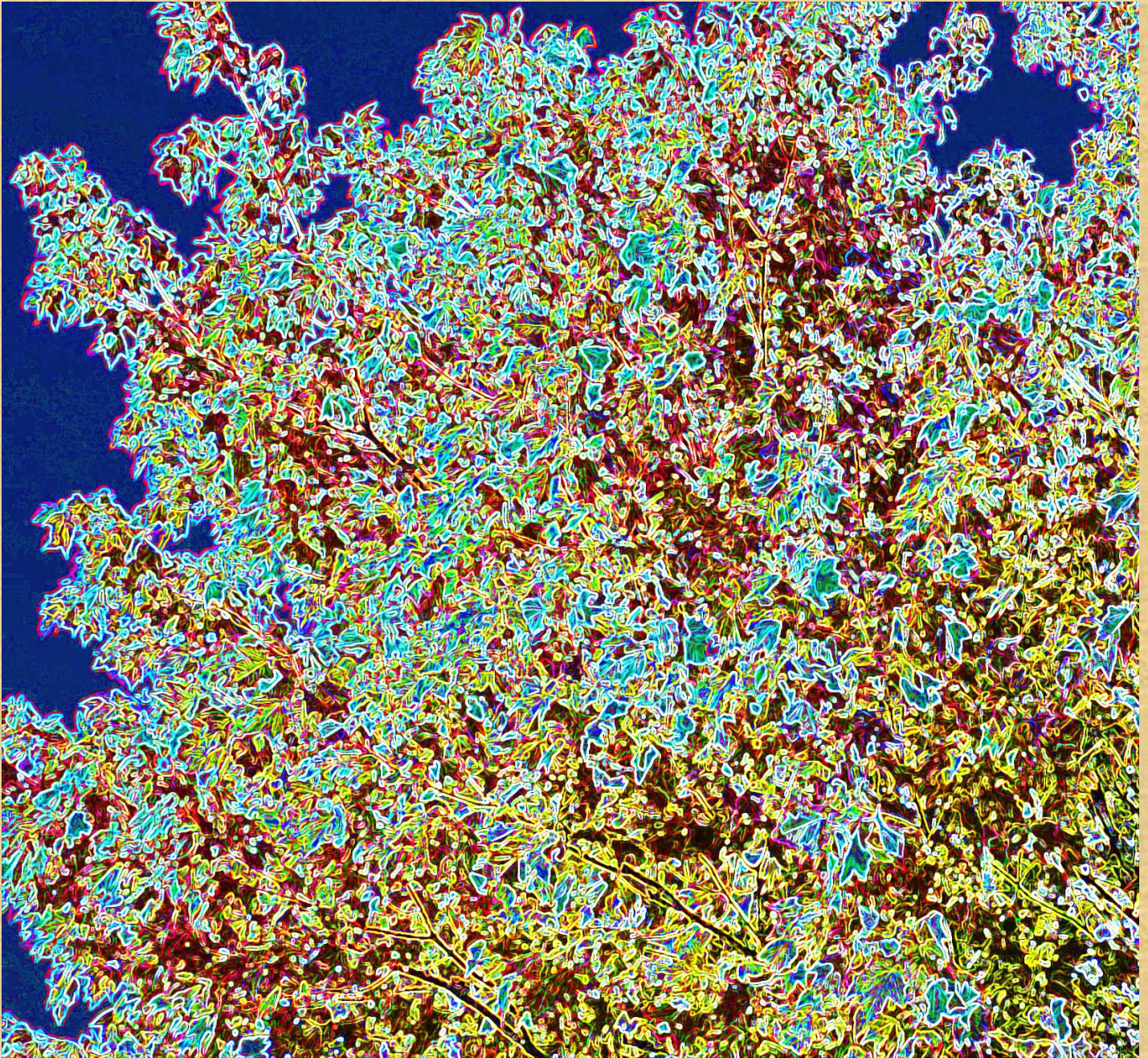
We can be called boy or girl as temporary fill-ins with the last name of the parents. We could be shuffled back and forth with labels based on volume, like "Screamer" or heft, like "Chubs."

The nurses know each label by heart while they toss us around the nursery like plump, pink footballs. We get gentler handling from the parents who always seem afraid they'll break us, who coo nonsense.

There are always onlookers who, having bundles of their own to gloat over, pick favorites from the rest, shunning those whose head's too big, whose leg's too sausage-like. For these voyeurs the tiny faces across the glass have unspoken names.

For this one, a wrinkled up nose calls up contempt; for that one, a pitying sigh frames ugliness, a cooing playful look goes out to the tow-head, a snarl for the wrinkled Shar Pei look. And some are just passively passed over as sleepy little "duds."

But no matter what they're called, each child goes home with a list of unspoken names—the ones the parents thought up and rejected, the ones grandparents hoped would carry on their lineage, and ones no one dared speak in case they stuck like blinking neon.



# JEAN KEARNS MILLER

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## 15 Bishop Street

Miss Hamriding, the midwife who attended my birth, demanded a warm house, so that Sunday morning, Mum, heavy in labor, and Auntie Vera hauled in coal from the shed directly behind the house into the kitchen and stoked the fire we used for any heat and also trash disposal. The kitchen was where we lived.

After his return from combat, Dad took a short course in chiropody (podiatry here) through the RAF and when he could afford to set up a practice, quit his bus driver job and started seeing clients in the small living room, which was abuzz with clients. Workers from the cotton mills with bad feet from all that standing, farmers, town bourgeoisie all came to have their feet done.

So we lived in the kitchen, an 11' x 11' room with the fireplace, a table and chairs, a cooker, a sink with a small hot water heater on the wall above, Mum's treadle sewing machine, the wireless, and eventually a ringer washer, and my blackboard and easel where I would spend my days drawing, erasing, drawing, erasing, drawing, mostly wedding groups, bride and groom center, girls on one side, boys—I had difficulty drawing the boys—on the other. No fridge. The climate and frequent shopping made them an extravagance.

Upstairs were three bedrooms. The largest was the one where I was born. The other two resulted from the partition of a single room into two tiny rooms. The entire house was very small, perhaps a little over 600 square feet.

You'll notice I'm leaving out the bathroom. That's because there wasn't one, because there wasn't a bath. No toilet either, in the house, that is. The toilet was in the back yard next to the coal shed. It was a clay drum with a toilet seat that led directly to the town sewer system. Well sort of. The toilets were called tipplers because there was a hinged basket down below, which, when full of waste, tipped over into the sewer. Most of our neighbors used scraps of the Daily Express rather than spending precious money on toilet paper, but Mum splurged, mandating two squares per go. No one wanted to go out to the yard

during the night, so we had chamber pots under our beds, which Mum emptied each morning.

We had no bathtub so on Saturdays, Mum managed to produce enough hot water to fill what was really a tinny trough feeder in the middle of the kitchen. We took turns bathing ourselves so we'd be clean for Sunday Mass the next day.

The house was what's called a terraced house, one unit in a row among rows after rows after crowded rows of mostly identical houses. Back then they were all black, from years of industrial soot. Nelson was a town planned during the industrial revolution, a service to the textile industry at a location chosen for its optimal climate. I was born at 15 Bishop Street.





# BENJAMIN STENSEN

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## Why are we fighting right now?

Why are we fighting right now? Thought experiment: create the universe, introduce one indifferent god. Doesn't matter who, any old god will do. Give the fledgling god some matter and antimatter to play with. Like a toddler mixing ice cream and Play-Doh, it indiscriminately tosses the two together. Us humans know better than anything else that polar opposites tend to either bond until the universe dissociates, or enslave their entire existence to destroy their demonic counterpart. Matter and antimatter choose the latter. Cumulative nothing bores the god, and it gives the edge to matter. I won't be too judgmental if you fast forward through the next hundred million years, but don't miss the first stars to form from the god's chosen winner.

Fast forward again, this time 13.8 billion years. Some of the stars decided to blow up and gain consciousness, making their home on a rock known to them as "Earth". Though recycled ad nauseum since the god first introduced them to its cosmic mixing pot, they never truly forget their roots: the matter that sought only to destroy, to disagree, to contradict. They don't have a perfect antithesis to wage war against anymore, so they find new ways to divide themselves. They fight amongst themselves, internally and externally. This is why we fight: it is in our nature. Our nature tears us apart, inclines us to destroy, tempts us with the prospect of eternal chaos. But here's a thought: give these husks of red giants and white dwarves a bit of self-awareness, a dash of introspection, and they'll start to put their infernal contrarianism to good use. They'll have a crisis about their violent nature. They'll use that fiery passion they were cursed with to make amends, to love themselves and their neighbors, to seek joy in creation rather than destruction. It'll take a lot of work, but they think they've got what it takes.

We hope they're not wrong.

# WCC POETRY CLUB

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## Where We Come From

*A group poem composed by WCC Poetry Club members William Bullard, Monica Cialek, Diane M. Laboda, and Tom Zimmerman*

1

Do blend with me and skew things  
Teals and oranges and  
Be called boy or girl as temporary  
Tugged by moon and burned by sun

2

They like the sound of it  
We just don't pop out looking like  
Dark angels and a forest murmuring  
A family and a traumatic past

3

A cooing playful look  
An ocean where I swam and ate  
I come through my imagination  
Fresh again

4

I bear a story I should tell  
One thing I do with language  
Seems like something  
Stuck like blinking neon

5

I pick up energy  
My very presence  
Could be shuffled back and forth  
It's all grown deep within me

**6**

**I tell people**

**We get gentler handling**

**Flying, landing, crying, growing**

**From an inner place**

**7**

**Have one identifying name**

**To lean into the wind**

**Have an inner body**

**Butting up against the terra-cotta**

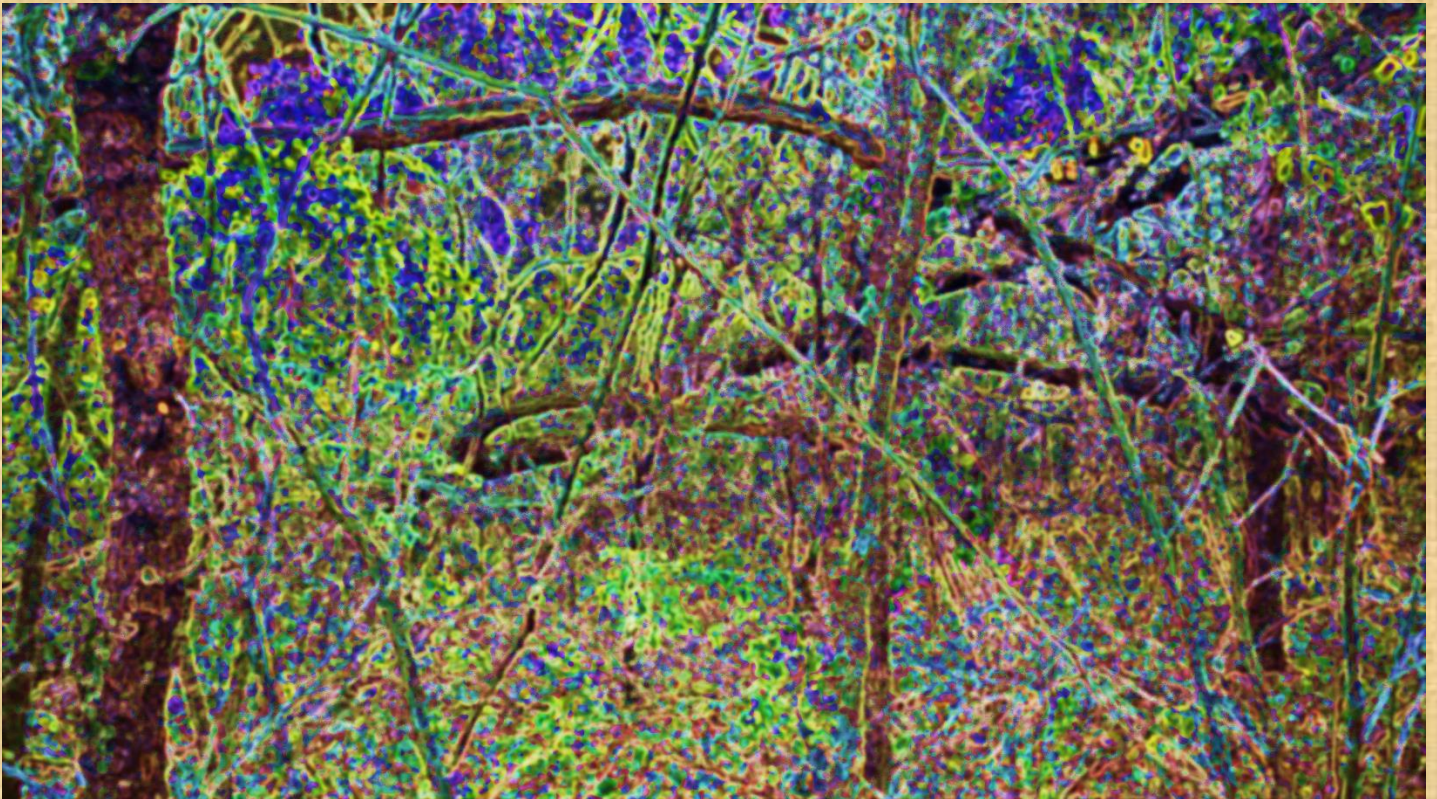
**8**

**Who walks beside me, sleeps within my dreams**

**My outer mind, my conscious mind, and then the world outside**

**The colors in this sunny place**

**Would carry on their lineage**



# TOM ZIMMERMAN

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## 19 Lines on Ancestry

My youngest sister's into ancestry:  
we're German, Irish, Danish, mostly. Dad  
and Mom had told us that. The geek in me,  
now three beers in, is paddling back to Hamlet,  
barking mad in Denmark's rot. Love glows  
so wanly from his words. The Ghost, his father,  
goads him (Why do I keep typing "gods him"?).  
Now Olivier's popped up, bleach-blond,  
theatrical: our funhouse-mirrored GIFs  
disintegrate and shift. The silver screen?  
Urn ash. So exeunt to '66,  
with Dad in Vietnam, and Mom and I,  
up watching TV late: it's *Waiting for  
Godot*, *Mostel* and *Meredith* a blur,  
my sisters long asleep. Ah, violins!  
A playlist Haydn string quartet has slipped  
me back to me: I'm sixty, time-warped, tipsy,  
smiling at the nighttime window's rain-streaked  
face I try to take a selfie of.

# TOM ZIMMERMAN

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## Channeling the Anasazi

We took the gravel road off Highway 4,  
northwest of Santa Fe, to reach Tsankawi:  
prehistoric Anasazi pueblo  
village.

Clouds hung low, the Jemez Mountains  
sawed at the horizon, earth and stone  
glowed orange-blue: no other humans there.

We hiked the mesa, climbed the ladders, stooped  
within the dwellings scooped out of the cliffs,  
saw petroglyphs. But this was seventeen years  
ago: no photographs, just memories  
that drift like smoke in wind.

I felt the spirits  
there. *Your reading and your mythic bent*  
*just conjured this*, my Western mind's kept telling  
me.

I crease a journal page, I've tried  
to leave my record.

So, what drove those people  
there? What made them disappear? Now we  
can answer feebly but more feelingly  
as schism and pandemic scatter us.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Alex Arzooyan** is a creative writing student at WCC; she loves to explore the mystical feminine in her poetry.

**Maryam Barrie**'s bio: Married mother, lives in woods, writes.

**William Bullard** is a long-time WCC Poetry Club member.

**Olivia Bottum** writes, "I have been taking classes at WCC since 1992! I love learning and I love the college. I admire my classmates, working so hard at so many things and doing school too. I am retired from the University of Michigan where I spent my days 900 years in the past working on a dictionary of medieval English."

**Monica Cialek** teaches math at Washtenaw Technical Middle College (WTMC).

**Noah Englehart** writes, "I am 18 years old, I am a freshman at WCC, and I'm currently working towards an associates in English and eventually a bachelor's in creative writing. I am an aspiring fantasy writer. My passions are reading, writing, music, film, the general arts, and dragons."

**Cornelius Fortune**'s work has appeared in *Yahoo News*, *CinemaBlend*, *The Advocate*, *The Novel & Short Story Writer's Market*, *Midwest Living*, and others. He holds an MA in English Literature and has taught composition, technical writing, as well as poetry and drama. He is a part-time faculty member of WCC.

In real life and now in virtual life, **Amy Higgins** has never had a deeper gratitude for the healing arts of poetry and teaching, and for writing, which heals from within.

**Clare Higgins** [Amy, Clare's mother, writes, "Clare's not a student, but she used to come and do her schoolwork behind Suzie's desk in the Writing Center now and then. She also came last fall to my ENG 270 class to share her experience, and to answer questions about a career in writing for television."]

**Diane M. Laboda** is a former teacher-librarian and retired WCC executive assistant. She enjoys exploring life's mysteries and sharing with others in her writing and artwork. She's published poetry, short stories, articles, and photos in literary journals and anthologies both online and in print. She has published two chapbooks, *Facing the Mirror* and *This Poet's Journey*, and is working on her first book-length collection of poetry on grief and care giving.

**Jean Kearns Miller** retired in 2019 after a 30-year teaching career at WCC.

**Benjamin Stensen** is an aspiring programmer and mathematics enthusiast currently in his second year at Washtenaw Community College. An Illinois native, Ben moved with his mothers and brother to Ann Arbor in 2014, and has been in love with the state since then. If one were to break into Ben's room, one may find him playing the clarinet and recorder, speedsolving Rubik's Cubes, learning math, talking with friends and playing video games, or pondering philosophical concepts. Ben will transfer to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor next semester to pursue a degree in computer science.

**Tom Zimmerman** teaches English and directs the Writing Center at WCC. He also serves as editor of *The Huron River Review* and *The Big Windows Review* and faculty advisor of the WCC Poetry Club.





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