



# Seers and Soothsayers

*A WCC Anthology  
Edited by Tom Zimmerman*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

This *Seers and Soothsayers* anthology is a production of the WCC Poetry Club, at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website in October and early November 2023.

Book design and uncredited images by Tom Zimmerman.

Copyright © 2023 the individual authors and artists.

The works herein have been chosen for their literary and artistic merit and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Washtenaw Community College, its Board of Trustees, its administration, or its faculty, staff, or students.

<https://wccpoetryclub.wordpress.com/>

The Writing Center/WCC Poetry Club collaborated with WCC's Bailey Library to host a "Seers and Soothsayers" hybrid open-mic event (in-person and on Zoom) on October 31, 2023, at the library. Thanks to Sandy McCarthy and the Bailey Library staff; to Rick Cocco of Media Services; and to English/College Readiness faculty members Maryam Barrie, Carolyn Crane, and Amy Higgins.



# SEERS AND SOOTHSAYERS

*A WCC Anthology Edited by Tom Zimmerman*

## Contents

Patricia Reyes	<i>Raven Spirit</i> (detail)	Fr cover
Zakeria Almajrabi	October	4
	Zombies	5
Maryam Barrie	Grandfather Ode	6
	Medicine	8
Carolyn Crane	Halloween Birthday	10
Kaitlyn Deming	The Space Between	12
Keegan Fuller	<i>Sun Setting on an Ancient Summer</i>	13
Madelyn Goodwill	<i>Bheloden feat. The Archivist</i>	14
	<i>A Guest for Mr. Spider</i>	15
	<i>Haunted / Holy</i>	16
	<i>Studies in Gouache feat. Andy Farrent</i>	17
Amy Higgins	In a Shady Corner of the Garden	18
Lilly Kujawski	holding on	19
Diane M. Laboda	Beginning Here	21
	Choices	22
	Eyes Filled with Sorrow	23
	Just Outside the Shadow	24
Kaye Li	Three Haiku	26
Nadia Lusignan	Two Haiku	27
Lameece Metwally	The True Scary Story	28
Ayowole Oladeji	Dawn of the Seers of Apocalypse	29
Patricia Reyes	<i>Raven Spirit</i>	30
Scott Schuer	The Last Winter Games	31
Paul H. Sequin	Weal and Woe	33
Sarah Smith	Fibonacci(s): The Dragon	34
	Haiku(s): Cult	36
	Haiku(s): The Heart of the Witch	37
	Practical Magic	39
	Sonnet: Breaking Free from Cult Mentality	41
Logan Thomas	Jack	42
KD Williams	Blood Magic	44
Wren Wilson	<i>hex yr local transphobe</i>	45
Tom Zimmerman	Oracles	46
Madelyn Goodwill	<i>Haunted / Holy</i> (detail)	Bk cover

## October

The leaves  
Brown  
Yellow  
Red  
From Green  
Sleeves  
Short to  
Long  
Just like the nights  
Everything soon to be  
Shadow black  
With streaks of white  
From the moon  
Oh so bright  
Only for the sun  
To be back  
Oh the light  
What is the sun or the moon  
To those who stay indoors  
To those who never seen the leaves change before  
Get out  
See the beauty galore  
Step out your door  
Stay vigilant  
Those who come out this month aren't innocent  
In fact you might wanna be outside  
Because they are now  
Inside.

## Zombies

Covered in blood  
The dark red streaks  
All over their cheeks  
Gore galore  
Limbs limp on the floor  
Heads on the streets  
Roll like soccer balls  
And their teeth sharp like cleats  
They slam against your door  
Hungry for more  
You open it  
Just for the bloody crowd to roar  
“TRICK OR TREAT”  
Seems like someone forgot  
It was Halloween.

# MARYAM BARRIE

---

## Grandfather Ode

*A child can experience her feelings only when there is somebody there who accepts fully, understands her, and supports her.*

*— Alice Miller, from *The Drama of the Gifted Child**

His partially paralyzed lower lip,  
the wet kisses I tried to lean away from

even as I curled myself into the cradle  
of his arms. In the black and white photos

of my parents' wedding, amongst the nervous,  
forced smiles, his frowning face worries.

I did not know as a child of the whistling murmur  
in his heart. I did not know of his growing

weakness, his fragile health. I did not know  
that after hearing backhanded slaps and gut punches

raining on my pregnant mother, he kicked my  
father down the sidewalk. At 62, mowing the lawn,

his heart attack forces him to the ground. The sudden  
emptiness where he had been. My grandmother's hysterical

sobs, her voice crying, Oh Frank! Frank! Don't leave me!  
A decade later, her stroke hurls her to the kitchen floor.

Her last un-slurred words call for him to save her.  
In my mind, I've heard his voice since then deliver  
information from the other side. During my abortion  
grief, his comfort, his promises. Once, my youngest child  
stopped nursing to ask me about the old man watching us.  
I saw no one. His tiny, even stitches still mend a tear in me —  
that seam has held a long while. His hands never hurt me,  
his eyes upon me even now. Those long-ago wet kisses.



# MARYAM BARRIE

---

## Medicine

I believe in it,  
though my daughters  
worry about cultural  
appropriation.

My black leather pouch  
crusted inside with remnants  
of their umbilical stumps,  
stones of amethyst and garnet.

At each baby shower, friends  
gave my girls gifts for small  
hand-sewn medicine bundles –  
rhodochrosite owls, quartz  
crystal balls, jade hearts.

I had dreamed we would  
create ceremonies to honor  
their bleeding, but they  
both said, Oh hell, no.

I believe in my inhalers  
and pills; my five anti-depressants  
keep my head above the rising waters.



I'm an equal opportunity  
medicine maker – Kwan Yin  
and Buffalo figures rest  
on my shrines while  
the Virgin of Guadalupe's  
feet rest upon her crescent moon  
next to Shiva and his snake.

I pour stinging nettle  
and cleavers tinctures  
into my Soda Stream  
water, inject myself  
monthly with my Xolair  
shot from Walgreens,  
get my COVID vaccines.

Anything can be medicine –  
my chronic pain pills,  
my grandson recognizing  
my voice over the phone.

I want to be medicine  
for my loved ones;  
Medicine, I believe in you.

## Halloween Birthday

I am about 11 or 12, and Mom and Dad say that this year I can have a real birthday party. This doesn't happen every year. Usually my celebration is confined to a flank steak and pineapple upside down cake with the family, and as gifts, a selection of JC Penney clothes, and a one dollar bill in a card with a cute little girl who's not me on the cover. The card is signed "Love Grandma." I don't understand yet that my parents are dead tired of raising kids and paying bills. They've already buried one of their children. Birthdays don't mean much to them.

This year, though, they say I can invite as many kids as I want. I pick six or eight girls who don't hate me too much. The Saturday before my birthday is Halloween, so my parents decide to do a Jack-O-Lantern decor. I watch them string the pumpkin-faced black crepe paper over the dining room chandelier. The plates, cups, and tablecloth all match, and the ghoulish orange faces lend a foreboding feeling. That week at school I put up with the usual yearly insults from the boys: *You're so ugly your mother should have had you a day early. You don't even need a Halloween costume. Must save your mom a lot of time.* I stare at the boys as they talk, watch their teeth, their open gangling mouths, and wonder where they came from. Why God placed so many of them into my life.

The party starts at two o'clock. Six places are set at the table. One girl comes and then another one. "I thought this was a birthday party," they say, staring at the table. I smile my crooked cat-eye glasses smile at them, ask them if they want to go into my room and listen to my new Bob Dylan record. They look at each other with those wide-eyed frozen jaw looks that once again let me know I am acting like the class freak.

"I guess no one else is coming," my mom says, sounding more tired than usual. She cuts into the black cake with orange frosting. We eat in silence. I open two presents that I don't want, try to think of something to say about them. When I

look up, the two girls are waiting by the door for their mothers to come. My parents are already taking the crepe paper down, rolling it neatly in case they ever want to use it again.



## The Space Between

We float along in an ocean.  
An ocean of memories.

We do what we're told like they want us to.  
Without any remedies.

Maybe someday you'll be one of us.  
Without any enemies.

*Sun Setting on an Ancient Summer*



# MADELYN GOODWILL

---

*Bheloden feat. The Archivist*





# MADELYN GOODWILL

---

*Haunted / Holy*





# MADELYN GOODWILL

---

## *Studies in Gouache feat. Andy Farrent*



## In a Shady Corner of the Garden

I find a scrum of black tomatoes,  
plum-heavy, round as pool balls, and shiny  
as Jagger's black leather pants.

Did some vampire breed this fruit as dark as pitch,  
intentionally slick, and cackle at his trick—  
tomatoes bled of their signature shade  
to create this cluster of funereal fruit?

Draw closer, find their skin is taut as youth.  
Rub a thumb along their hairy stems;  
catch the scent any gardener knows—  
musky and harsh, like a teenager's sweat.

Bees keep back from the nightshade stink.  
The vine is strangely still among humming clumps  
of asters and zinnias like splotches of paint.

Let's risk it. They burst at the touch of teeth,  
no imposter after all, they taste just right—  
seedy, meaty, salty, sweet.

## holding on

### a poem for March 2021

with every breath that splinters through my lungs  
i feel the weight  
of two and a half million dead  
i carry each of them with me

two and a half million  
i don't know how to count that high  
i don't know how to translate the loss  
sometimes i don't know how to think about anything else

i'm holding them all  
the morgues overflow into the streets  
the numbers rise every day  
counting what is not a number  
tallying what can never really be counted

i'm holding you  
i don't need to know your name  
i can't bear to look anyway  
but i feel you in my veins, in my dreams

sometimes all i can do is scream

usually, we have only enough in us to get through a day

i'm in the car imagining what the doctors can't unsee  
the other drivers on the road have been kinder lately  
sometimes all there is to hold onto is a steering wheel  
my knuckles grip the leather, turn white as a hospital bed sheet

i heard it in the nurse's voice over the phone  
i see it in the cashier's eyes at the grocery store

everything runs flat  
it's been march for 12 months now

just about all we can do is talk to each other,  
but there's hardly anything left to say

except "i love you"  
always, "i love you"  
i say it to everyone  
can the driver in the car next to me hear it?  
i'm saying it to him now  
i'm saying it to you

it's been march for 12 months now  
how does this end?  
will it ever?

i'm terrified of when it's over,  
because what kind of ruin will lie in the wake?  
what kind of aftermath awaits?

i don't want to know the final count  
i'm tired of knowing anything at all

i grip the steering wheel  
it's a balancing act  
all i can do is hold  
hold on  
even when there is nothing left in my hands.

## Beginning Here

I'm beginning here with an echo of you—  
the warmth once promised from your  
side of the bed, the sound of newspaper  
rustling in the kitchen, the flair of light  
as you open the refrigerator at 2 AM,  
the padding of footsteps as you return,  
ever mindful of my sleep.

I'm beginning here with shadows  
against the wall, some my own demons,  
some looking just like yours as you trace  
a path along the wall to another world,  
another home, our yurt. You marvel at  
the fire in the middle of the kitchen floor,  
its glow.

I'm beginning here with terrors that dive  
deep inside me that can no longer  
turn your disease around or fix  
the day I lost you. The terror never leaves.  
The terror resides next to my heart, pressing  
hard on my breath, in a pocket that holds  
only silence and dreams and missing.

## Choices

I once wove a minimalist basket from thin air  
and raffia. The basket did not know what  
it was going to be at the beginning. I did not know  
what I was going to create with my imperishable hands  
until well past the middle.

I once painted a picture of blurry trees  
with watercolor paints. The trees did not know  
how green they wanted to be.  
I did not know how many shades of green  
there are in the rainbow.

I once wrote a poem using words  
in my buttoned-up head. The poem did not know  
what it wanted to say. I did not know  
what I wanted to know, so I trusted the words  
as they churned out of my pen.

I once entered the stubborn door called living.  
Living didn't know what it was supposed to be.  
I did not know what living could look like, until I  
discovered it was actually the process of dying,  
and one day I would no longer be able to make  
indelible choices.

## Eyes Filled with Sorrow

She entered the coffin  
no brain, no bone,  
no air, no soul  
left amid the satin  
beneath prying eyes  
that squinted in the shade.

She lay beside herself  
no rest, no peace,  
trying to regain  
the part of her self she'd lost  
somewhere between the satin  
sheets and satan.

She crawled back into  
her body, breathed hot air  
into her lungs, reclaimed  
her spirit, closed her eyes,  
placed her hand over her heart  
and squeezed.

Her legs danced her in and out  
of the grave she'd dug  
herself into, knowing less  
about digging than laying  
herself down and opening  
to good and evil, mostly evil.

## Just Outside the Shadow

I live in the forgetfulness of an age  
three-quarters gone, hoping for a heart  
that will beat smoothly, free of hurt  
or grief, hoping for an eye that will see  
widely and true.

I live to hold on. I live to let go  
so I can live. Often I live surrounded  
by shadows and spirits long gone  
to this physical world, but ever present  
in my sight and breath and soul.

I live long after some. I live despite  
fresh wounds barely healed, almost  
to the quick, red and raw and festering  
nightly in dreams of love and lonely  
and loss. I live in the shade of almost sunlight.

I live arrested by words that jump off  
the page, that won't lay flat and reassuring,  
that won't mean just what I meant  
when I wrote them. They encircle  
every hour with the promise of tears.

I live alone in the crowd of normal,  
nameless people who carry on flat-footed  
while I float just off the ground-ing, unsure  
of my next step, my next breath, my resilience,  
my resolve. I live just outside the shadow  
of him.



She entered the coffin looking  
for refuge, but found none.  
She knew then that her  
fate lie in her own bones,  
her humanity lie in the eyes  
she filled with sorrow.



# KAYE LI

---

God slips on large gloves  
cradles his body— death is  
still one-size-fits-all

\*\*\*

my last goodbye was  
whispered—a pathetic toss into  
a silent universe

\*\*\*

every Chinatown  
welcomes a long lost cousin  
for the first time in years

# NADIA LUSIGNAN

---

Raspberry fingers  
Paint bloodshed so sweetly –  
A universe of irony.

\*\*\*

Sun and moon's embrace –  
In their midst, your absence stings  
Return, find your place.

# LAMEECE METWALLY

---

## The True Scary Story

Red, green, orange, black  
Are lovely colors of Halloween  
Kids play there in the back  
Dressed like a scary queen

But other kids are shaking in their bed  
Scared crying then covered with red  
After a loud bomb over their head  
Left them alone without a word to be said

**STOP THE GENOCIDE!**

## Dawn of the Seers of Apocalypse

The day soars to new heights, darkening, thin on ice. Feeling scared and petrified knowing that you are about to hear your future from the one and only reader of the cards with powers to predict what your future holds.

Walking into a dark room, sound of creeping noise that pounds like thunder, force of immortality there. You see an old lady sitting on a crooked chair wearing a black cape, black boots, and a deck of reading cards in her hand.

As she begins to shuffle the cards back and forth with the speed of light, she then places them on the table, then asks the scared soul to pick one card that was laid on the table. She glares at the poor soul then tells him his future is bright and shining. Lastly, she tells him, you are going to find a beautiful princess and get married and live happily ever after.

*Raven Spirit*



## The Last Winter Games (a future fiction)

*“We’d like to live as we once did – but history will not permit it.”*  
*J.F.K., Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963*

Ellesmere Island, Arctic Circle, scattershot depressions, still glacial, clinging to a granite face backdrop: the final Winter Olympic Games.

Antarctica, with 200 mph Katabatic winds and UV levels four times normal, was considered as a site, then dismissed – a local iceshelf calved and swept toward the South American land mass, snagging Tierra Del Fuego – that deadly archipelago – wiping it out.

But up north on Ellesmere, a starving-artist landscape, a staging area for workers finding creative uses for equipment abandoned by the tundra drilling project of 2026.

A quarter-million 50-gallon drums were fashioned into a ski jump ramp. The oil drum became the primary icon of these games adorning t-shirts, websites, and trash cans.

Canada negotiated with and compensated the Nunavut Nation in an agreement to host the games –

Ellesmere – the Qikiqtaaluk region bears a name unpronounceable to many outsiders.

Volunteers built moguls with short shovels scraping off patches of Arctic freshwater for rinks and curling pitches. One determined woman sculpted a snowboarding bowl with a 42-year-old Caterpillar – bulldozing slush into a sleek undulation of grace and speed.

There was no telling where athletes were from or what sport they represented. The only certainties were skiing, boarding, skating, or shooting. National representatives brought flags, banners, and attendant anthems, but athletes mainly gravitated to familiar faces from past games and mingled with the crowds in a comfort zone outside of country, competing for themselves, each other, and those abroad.

The victors sported gold, silver, and bronze carabiners, hanging from lengths of climbing rope around their necks.

The victors raised fists of plastic flowers to a sky not long for this world.



## Weal and Woe

I looked into my own eyes  
mirror showing mirror back  
scrying pools affixed to my skull

one eye weal

the other woe

What portent of misery will I see with one  
What blushing fortune of life will the other be filled with

I have spent my life reading doom when joy is foretold  
I do not believe any fortune told only the one I tell myself  
I forget that they are both true  
Always

## Fibonacci(s): The Dragon

How  
dare  
you wake  
the dragon?  
Lying in wait for  
the perfect moment to reveal

its  
true  
form. A  
creature of  
solitude, guarding  
its ancient gifts in silence. At

rest,  
the  
dragon  
is peaceful  
until provoked. Mere  
breathing becomes fire. Sparks ignite

the  
flame,  
while air  
feeds the fire.  
With each passing breath,  
protection and preservation

of  
self  
leads to  
destruction.  
Such fervent power  
intimidates. As the dragon

feels  
safe,  
tempers,  
flame turns to  
ash; the dragon can  
harness its power as its own.



## Haiku(s): Cult

It's harder to leave,  
when you are needed, used for  
their cause. Your presence

pure utility.

It will not be the same when  
you are gone and they

know it. Contrary  
to what they believe, they will  
survive without you.

It may be hard to  
leave once and for all, yet, it's  
not impossible.

## Haiku(s): The Heart of the Witch

At its core, magic  
is neither good nor bad, it  
simply is. Magic

encompasses the  
essence of the earthly plane  
and spiritual

realm. Magic is life  
in all its forms. It is the  
heart of the witch and

the purity of  
intention that determines  
how magic is used:

For selfish reasons,  
bringing harm unto others,  
to control and gain

power over those  
out in the world. Promoting  
ugliness. Or the

alternative, for  
the greater good of all, to  
help and heal others,

to discover one's  
own personal power to  
bring light to this world.

Illuminating  
the darkness, raising the earth's  
vibration, all while

creating beauty  
out of perpetual growth.  
I choose the latter.



## Practical Magic

To embrace a life of true individuality denotes courage, for there is virtue to be found in being different.

By choosing to recognize that you are different from the rest, rather than feel shame, your spirit is filled with relief.

You've always known that you are an old soul that has walked this plane of existence for centuries, repeating soul lessons until learned, changing, evolving, and always moving forward.

The magic in your soul has always existed, radiating from your core, your inner light beaming throughout, to all who look your way.

Lucid dreams show snapshots of the future, coming to fruition several months later. It feels like *déjà vu*, yet, deep down you know it's so much more.

You hear the words your loved ones are about to speak, to the point where you finish their sentences, unsure of how you knew what they were about to say, just that you had to say it.

You think about a person or an event and shortly after, they appear, as if you've summoned them, unknowingly, of course.

You're drawn to stones, ancient lore, myths, and nature is your sacred space. In the quiet, you are able to truly heal and rejuvenate, away from draining energy vampires siphoning your power.

These oddities and synchronicities are reflections of the power you've carried all along, yet, suppressed.

This power, if not contained, can carry the wrath of dragon's breath, the fire of imploding stars and the sun, itself.

This power can be controlled over time, and to be granted such a precious gift is a blessing, not a curse. Curses only have power when you believe they do, and I don't believe, not in curses.

With pure intent, I embrace my gift, casting healing energy to the world, to my loved ones, and even to those who have wronged me along the way.

A present day witch with a passionate heart and a sensitive soul. I know my gift can protect me, as can the deities I call upon for support.

At my core, I carry the power of the high priestess, the hearth of the empress, the strength of the knight, the light of the sun, and the mystery of the moon.

Magic will continue to save me, even from myself. With positive intentions, I will always ask for help, as I learn to harness my power, my intuitive spirit, and channel my gift for the greatest good of all.



## Sonnet: Breaking Free from Cult Mentality

With an open mind and an open heart,  
I journeyed through life accepting all, yet,  
at times, to my own detriment. A part  
of me knew, deep down, that some were a threat.  
I encountered predators and I was  
the prey: conflict avoidant, innocent,  
impressionable. Failure to stop, pause,  
I got involved without much thought. Able  
to see beyond their illusions, I can  
discern what is real and what is fake. I  
would rather be aware of the truth than  
believe a fallacy, than live a lie.  
Those blissfully unaware remain trapped.  
I escape control, I always adapt.

# LOGAN THOMAS

---

## Jack

Look down...

Mystery seeds randomly found.  
Handful of odd looking species.  
Curiosity and questions arise.  
Pumpkins? Corn? Apples? Sunflowers?

Waking early. Walking back outside.  
Pecking chickens peek for worms.  
The stinky, smelly compost attracts them.  
Like mighty tractors tilling the earth.  
I join in and scrape dirt mounds.

Bright sun, warmly beating down.  
Sweaty hands protected by worn gloves.  
Small nests planted with purpose.  
Look up...  
Clouds pass through and bring rain.  
Rubber boots make muddy footprints.

Pull weeds. Days pass by. Colors change.  
Yellow-green growth turns tall, orange.  
Cool breezes now blow in October.  
Mature harvest is delightful. Bountiful.  
Big, metal tool clips vine.  
Twigs snap at the weight of its glory.

Bumpy grooves with precision.  
Soft, seedy core carefully removed.  
Scary. Mysterious. Festive. Fulfilling.

Towering scarecrows hover near it.  
Costumed children stare at it.  
Bucketfuls of candy adorn it.  
A candle now gloves from within it.

Ghosts and ghouls.  
Howls and screams.  
Witches and brooms.  
Werewolves with fierce teeth.

Look around...  
It's now Halloween.  
Trick or Treat?  
No, pumpkin seeds.



## Blood Magic

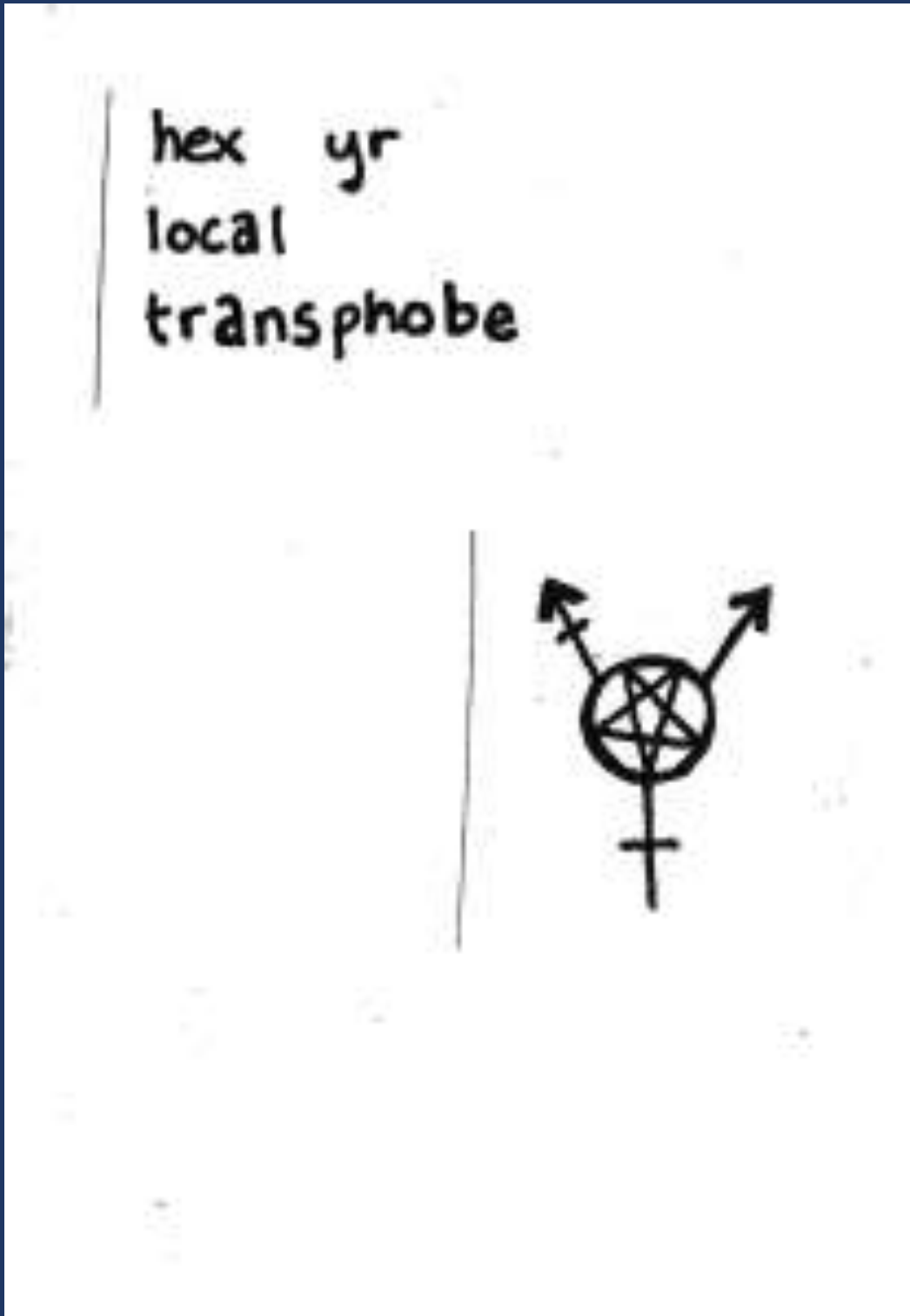
What once was the work of a witch,  
foretelling fate, foreboding warning,  
is now managed by my Apple Watch  
tracking my levels each morning.

How cruel it feels to bleed  
a crimson sigil on my thigh  
when hoping for life to seed—  
another secret vigil, a sigh.

I don't feel like a vessel,  
more like a broken vase,  
yet each morning I bustle  
a smile upon my face.

For I've seen myself a mother—  
I've envisioned immortal design.  
I've always been a daughter.  
I've always been alive.

*hex yr local transphobe*



## Oracles

1

The sky today: an oracle that you  
cannot decode. You're looking at its pictures,  
sipping coffee: one self-medication.

This Beethoven string quartet, another.  
The dog is whining on the bed. Your child.  
The TV forecast says high winds, a storm.

Oh you'll survive. Unless you don't. You check  
the football schedule: odds against your favorite  
team. As if you'd place a bet. You witness

and react, you hoard your courage for  
the odd creative burst. Pale sun, blown grass,  
a lone bird chirping, engines whirring down

the interstate. This data you record.  
But what's its beauty, use? You ask your gods,  
"If you exist, don't let me waste my life."

2

The leaves are turning. Planet too. The universe  
expanding. You, however, shrivel.  
Leaves are burning. Mahler does this to you.

Leonard Cohen. Poe. Moribund  
with jokes thrown in. Now goblet shards:  
the coffee's cold. You drink the darkness up.

Your brighter angel comes to you, all sooty,  
scabbed: your mythic self on Sunday mornings.  
Says, "Blind seer, we know. You think you're lightly

here, just passing through. We'd like you to  
interrogate your ambiguity,  
examine your detachment." Who does that?

You cue up Bruckner on the playlist, hone  
an axe to split your skull. Sublime. The brass  
the song of gods, if such a thing exists.



