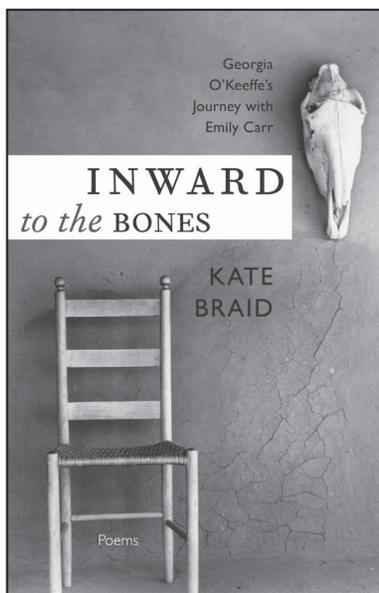


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*Inward to the Bones: Georgia O'Keefe's
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61

It's always raining in a rain forest.

This may seem self-evident but I
only grasped it today. There we sat
wrapped in mackintoshes
under the eternal drip,
when I looked up to a perfectly clear blue sky.

Emily caught my motion.
Beautiful day, she said
and grinned
as a steady veil of water fell between us
from the canopy above.

My sketchbooks and even my skin
are swollen in damp.
Wetness is everywhere.
It comes from branches above
and runs in freshets below.
It sits in damp puddles
and rises in mist off the forest floor.
It wets my clothes and hands
as I brush by leaves. Even as I sit,
it lies on my skin like a perpetual sheen
of forest-raised sweat.

In this country, by day I sip the air
and by night I float.

— Kate Braid

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The Trumpet

A man blows from a trumpet a high, bright note.
He's come to play the sound of April sunlight
filling Grandview Park, the sound of cherry blossoms
so ethereal they might burst into small, fiery clouds,
to play the strange affection one suddenly feels for one's
neighbours in this ambivalent, rain-sodden city.

Small children tumble from swings and jungle gym
to waddle toward him. A ring of small trumpeters
forms to pay tribute. He's an emissary of the sun
come to herald the spring. They know it, but he
doesn't. He simply wishes to be free of his narrow,
humid room above the Uprising Bakery.

He plays a silver sound, like the long strand of saliva
streaming from a young man's mouth as his head
sags, and he dreams the gleaming sweep of a curve
in the Bow River, where he and his brothers fished
for trout, before the sun charred the sky to blackness
and the river and the fish and everyone got drunk.

A man blows from a trumpet a high, bright note.
We stand inside it as we stand inside this sunlight
flooding the parks and streets and alleys of the city,
this light that pulls the bright blades from the browned
earth, as thousands of small, forgotten deaths rise up, grateful
for the spring and this light that leaves only to return.

— Rodney DeCroo

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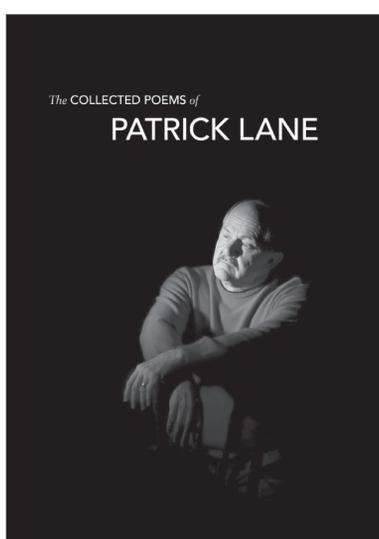


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Temper

That I remember the old blacksmith tempering iron in dust and fire,
the way a blade or horseshoe struck the water, the blue flare,
a sudden quench marking the iron, an axe head's colour his signature.
Along the blade of the knife he made for me, a whisper moved
as if the sun had breathed on it. He showed me the tempered whorl,
traced the waves of blue and gold with a finger thick as my wrist.
I carried the blade through the sagebrush hills and high above the lakes
stood and saw the smoke from his steady fire, the bellows deep
in the coals, setting in the sky a trade, his great hammer ringing.

I have seen the names of men on swords from the Shogunate,
on wisps of steel from Spain, the far Toledo fire still living there.
That blacksmith stood in fire for me. His hammer rang the folded iron
in layers thin as leaves and now I write the knife that it, long lost,
be not forgotten, that the sun in words be set in iron, that flames
leave as a blade a tempered breath, a blue as cold as the sun,
that a man be sure as the edge all lost knives know,
that a single breath drawn out of fire can be an iron name.

— Patrick Lane

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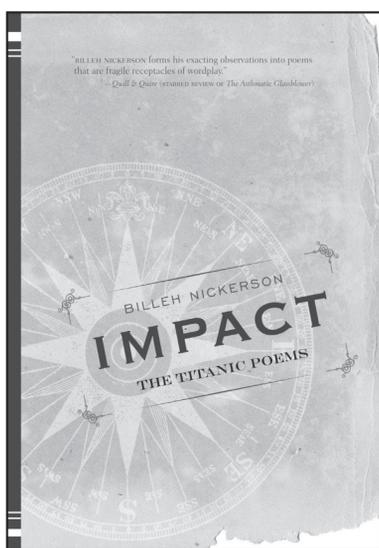


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The Piano Player

Unlike his musician compatriots
whose instruments could be carried on deck

the ship's piano player could only watch
as his band mates played on.

At first he just swayed to the music
then tapped his feet and hummed

but he couldn't withstand
the ache to play along

even without a sound
his hands slipping from gloves,

his cold fingers
tickling the air, ghost-style.

— Billeh Nickerson

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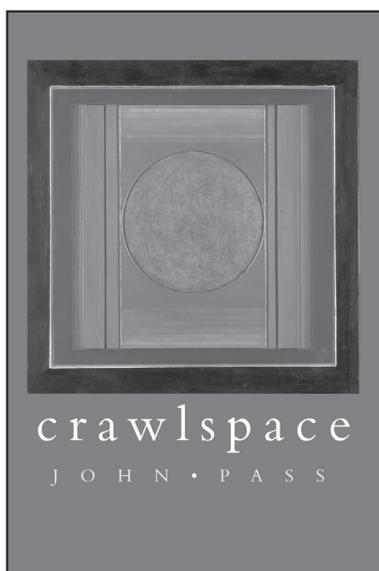


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Fly-ash

The outdoor furniture and decks and roofs
are covered in fly-ash and dew.

Who'd be burning trash in the midst
of this heat-wave? Was there a bonfire

at the campground by the lake?
And then I remember the sirens last night

we assumed was an incident
at the park. Rowdies or a dive

into shallow water. I drive around
to find the fire's site, my neighbour's
log house burned to the ground. Lucky

there was no wind says the Chief, lucky
we've got this new reciprocal

agreement with the adjacent district.
With our one pumper we'd have been lucky

to stop this at the highway. Lucky.
My neighbour lost everything. Everything

went up in smoke and
sifted down through windless moonlight
to blanket a bigger everything: the surrounding hectares.

I've still got my view, he says.
I'm not leaving.

—John Pass

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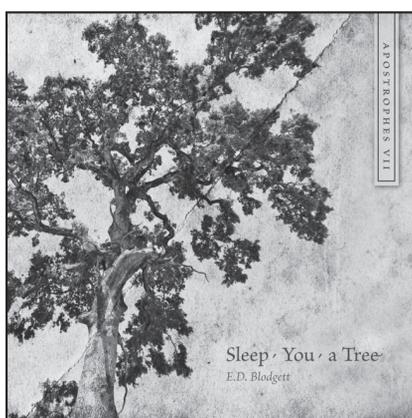


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Apostrophes VII: Sleep, You, a Tree by E.D. Blodgett,
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Shades

May they come slowly, the long shades of night, no bird surprised
but altering the light from infinite to infinite until
it comes to rest upon your hands and you might see it lie as stones
lie down beneath untroubled waters where quietly the fish
together float in sleep, and air upon the grass is still. The earth
is born there in that darkness you have touched asleep upon

your flesh, and there the rivers stand, the trees across its surface move,
and all the stories you had heard in childhood, of creatures great
and small, dissolve from word to flesh, the air transformed into a sigh—
o wordless turning of the earth alive inside the darkness of
your hands, everything turning with the new sun, the smaller fires
of the stars igniting the skies, the dark dumbfounded and alive.

— E.D. Blodgett

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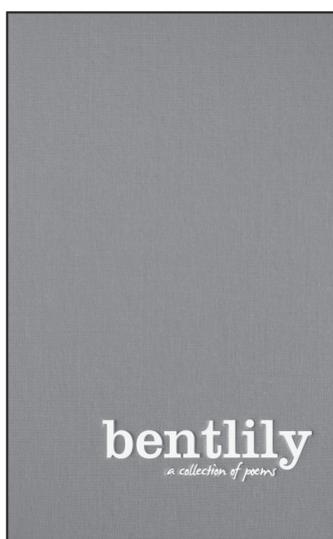


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I am not old

I am not old, she said
I am rare

I am the standing ovation
at the end of the play

I am the retrospective
of my life
as art

I am the hours
connected like dots
into good sense

I am the fullness
of existing

you think I am waiting to die
but I am waiting to be found

I am a treasure
I am a map
these wrinkles are imprints
of my journey

ask me
anything.

— Samantha Reynolds

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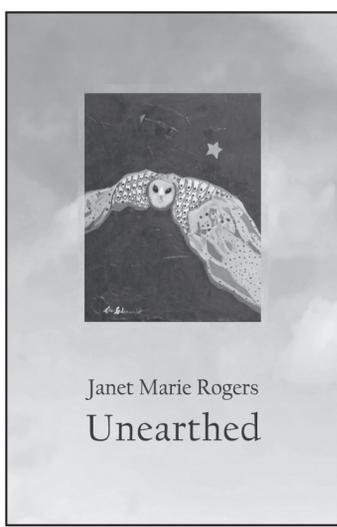


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Janet Marie Rogers
Unearthed

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Much Worse

black birds are talking
nonsense
a lot of gossip
and half truths
speaking in tongues
complaining
as we do

when things can be
much worse

who teaches the birds
to mock us?
follow us?
copy us?
and show us
how silly we are

when things can be
much worse

— Janet Marie Rogers

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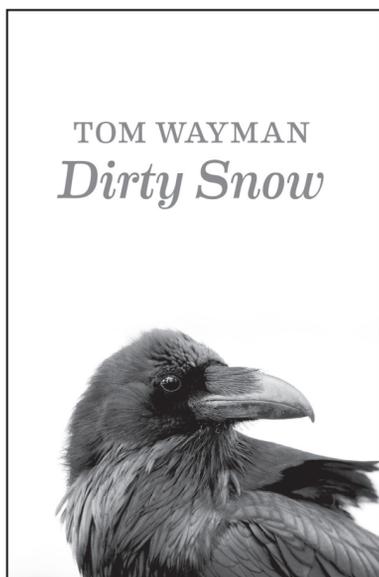


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The Grouse that Flew Underground

My shovel cuts into brown soil:
each slam of the blade under my boot
chops roots, deflects off stones,
pries up gravelly earth
to be carried to the surface and piled beside
the ruffed grouse—eyelids closed
against the enormity
of the day's changes: the bird strutting the lawn
neck fanned outward, until it leaped aloft
to stutter through air to roost
in the leafless birch. Then heaving itself
into air once more toward a gap
in the wall of the house
which reached out and struck it
down amid the newly rising
iris shoots, tulip leaves already clipped short
by the deer. Just within the forest gate
I clear a path for the grouse:
an entrance my shovel hoists it into,
feathered wings perfectly intact
and ready to propel it
through the ground, to alight on buried roots
and perch, to descend to pace atop bedrock,
drumming to attract a mate,
then lift to flap ungainly across soil: a bird for my parents
to point out to each other
in their brown sky.

—Tom Wayman

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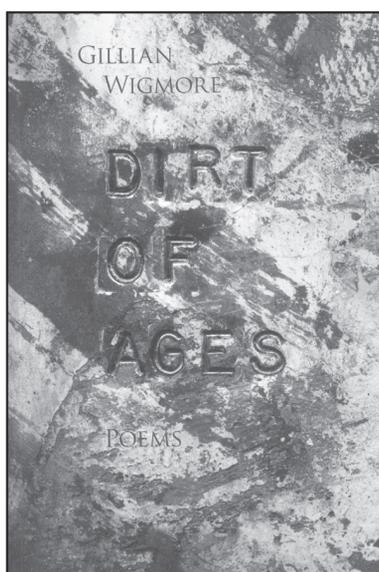


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Late Season Sun

double-stacked containers on the train headed east racket
over the black train bridge, the Fraser headed south down below
late september afternoon, the sun lower in its arc
the earth rolling around in the sky – the highway
at rush hour chock a block with blazers and mud flaps
I'm gapped out on Radio 2 then yanked back with a question –
how to explain to the kids in the back that I'm not here?
I'm back on Highway 16 west, 16 years old, and the whistle blows
the ground shakes, the train rumbles west, the driveway dust
rises then settles on my face and arms, standing still
following only with my eyes, the transport trailers
always going elsewhere, the highway, the train tracks
the dust and the sunshine – how to explain
to the voices in the backseat: that the river runs here
and that I am also there, waiting at the road edge
watching transport tributaries flow to either sea?

— Gillian Wigmore

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