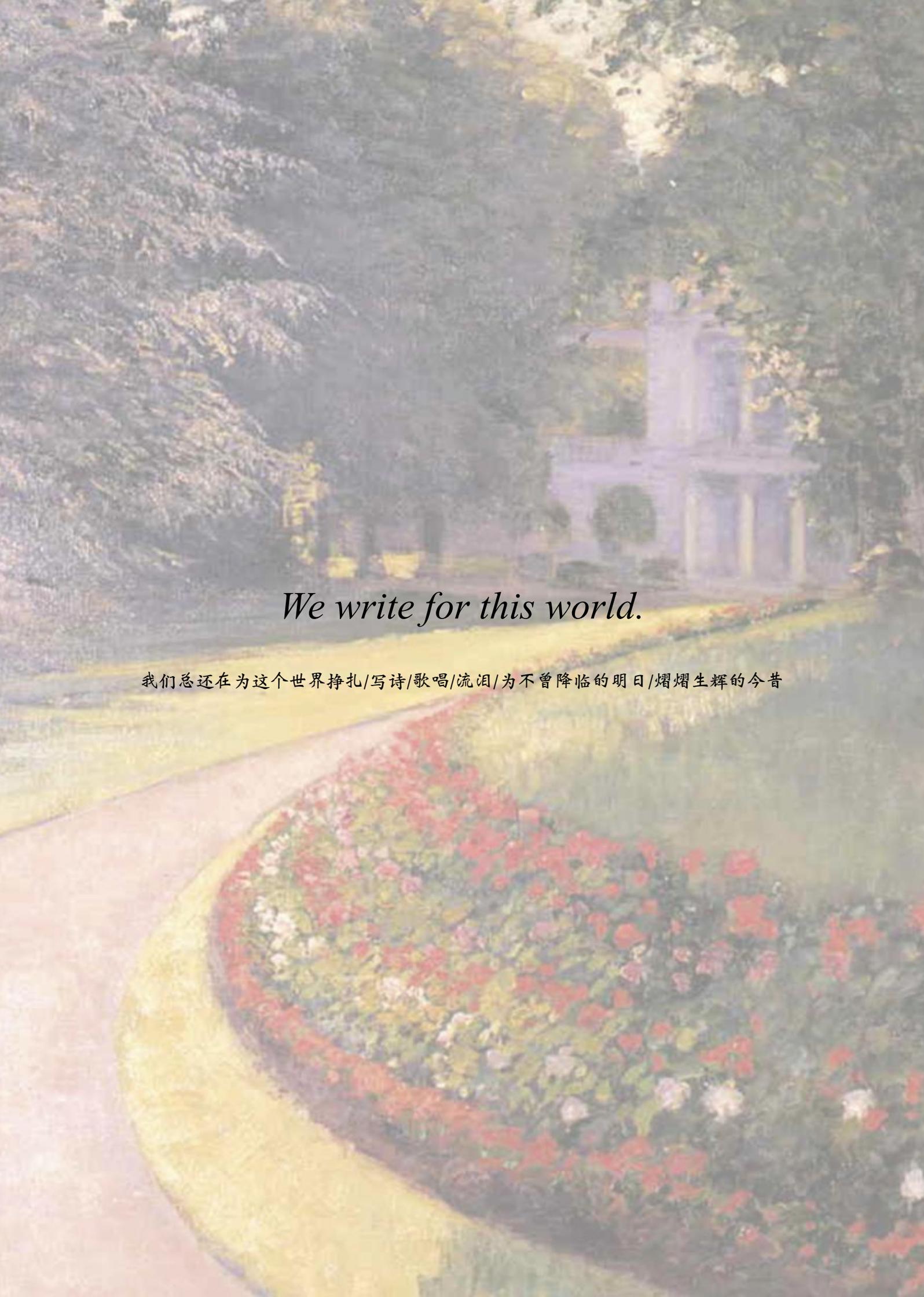


An impressionist painting of a garden scene. In the foreground, there is a dense field of green foliage with scattered red flowers. In the middle ground, a long, low wall or fence runs across the frame. Behind the wall, several buildings with red-tiled roofs are visible, surrounded by tall, slender trees. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall style is characteristic of Impressionism, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color.

**POETIC
SUM**

#ISSUE 6

**EDITORS: SHIYANG SU
JIANING RAN**

A painting of a garden path leading to a classical building. The path is paved and curves through a lush garden with various flowers, including red and white blooms. In the background, a large, classical-style building with columns and a pediment is visible, surrounded by dense greenery and trees. The overall style is impressionistic, with soft colors and visible brushstrokes.

We write for this world.

我们总还在为这个世界挣扎/写诗/歌唱/流泪/为不曾降临的明日/熠熠生辉的今昔

An impressionistic painting of a garden path leading to a building. The path is paved and curves through a lush garden with various flowers, including red and white blooms. In the background, a building with a prominent tower or spire is visible, surrounded by dense green foliage. The overall style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette.

Contributors

Albert N. Katz

Alison Jennings

Allen Weber

Ana Marta Fortuna

Annalisa Hansford

Carol Casey

Dana Kinsey

Diane Vogel Ferri

DS Maolalai

Evgeniya Dineva

Jianing Ran

John Johnson

Lark Beltran

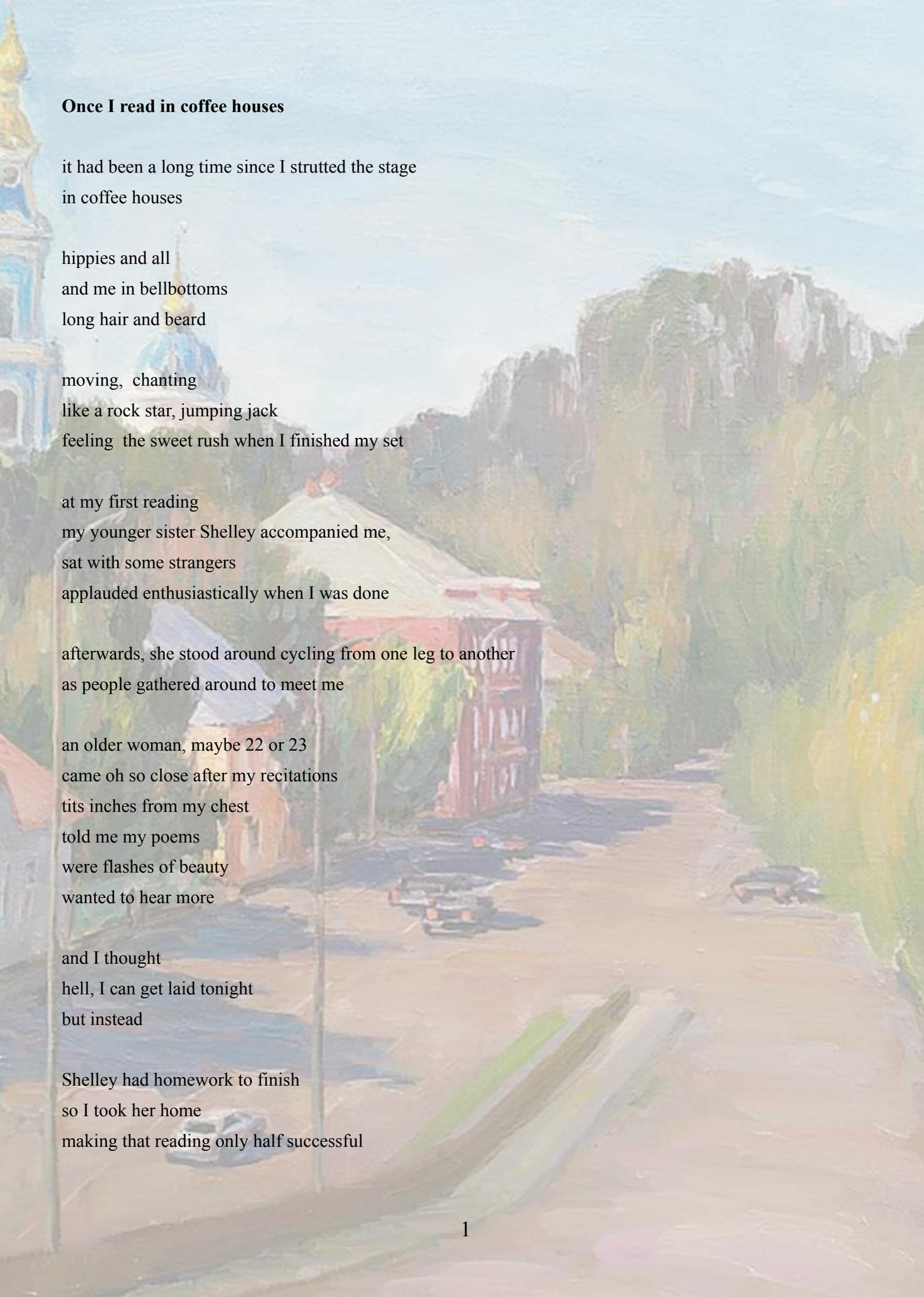
Megan Wildhood

Nina Wasik

Shiyang Su

Suhrith Bellamkonda

Yuan Changming



Once I read in coffee houses

it had been a long time since I strutted the stage
in coffee houses

hippies and all
and me in bellbottoms
long hair and beard

moving, chanting
like a rock star, jumping jack
feeling the sweet rush when I finished my set

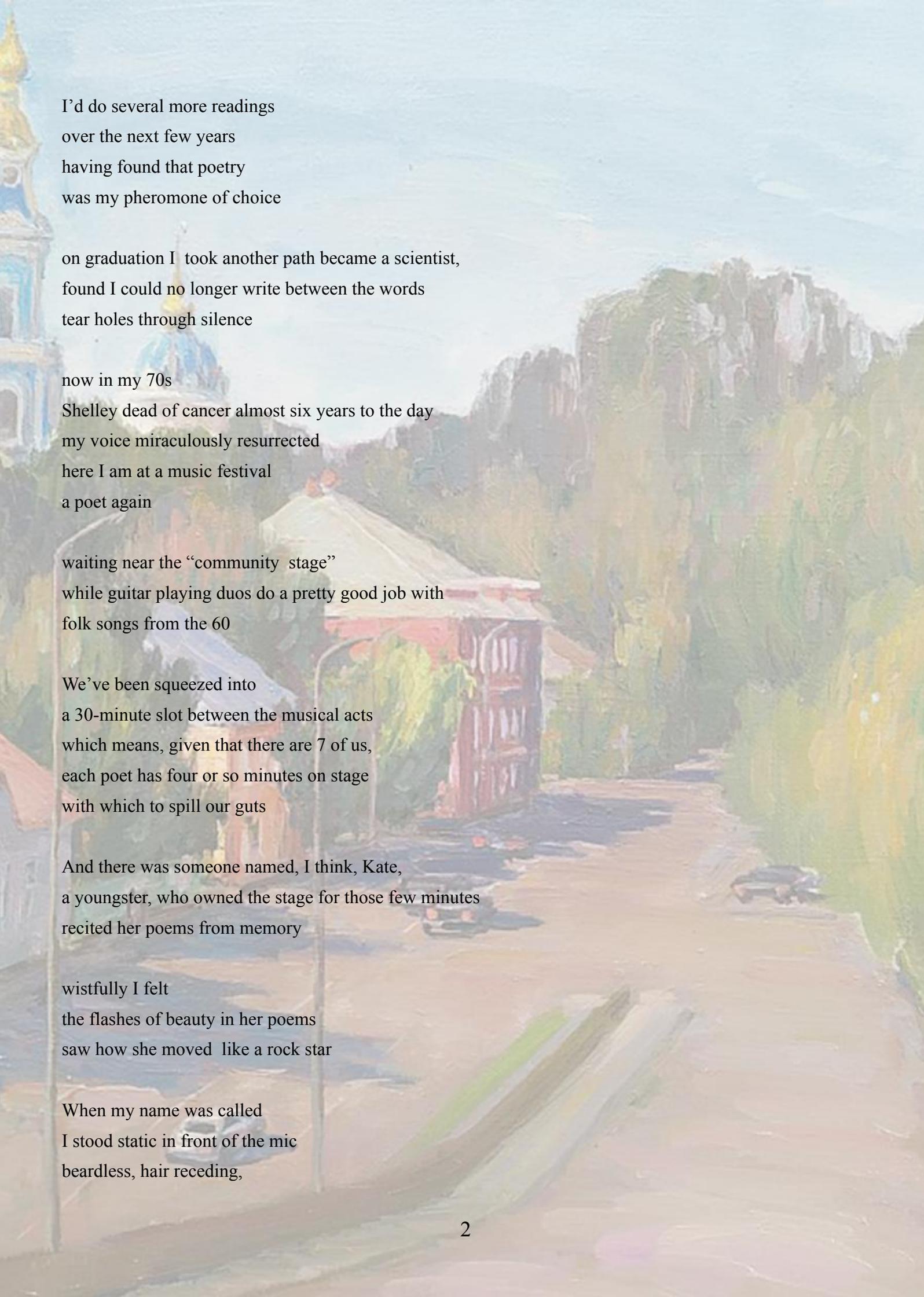
at my first reading
my younger sister Shelley accompanied me,
sat with some strangers
applauded enthusiastically when I was done

afterwards, she stood around cycling from one leg to another
as people gathered around to meet me

an older woman, maybe 22 or 23
came oh so close after my recitations
tits inches from my chest
told me my poems
were flashes of beauty
wanted to hear more

and I thought
hell, I can get laid tonight
but instead

Shelley had homework to finish
so I took her home
making that reading only half successful



I'd do several more readings
over the next few years
having found that poetry
was my pheromone of choice

on graduation I took another path became a scientist,
found I could no longer write between the words
tear holes through silence

now in my 70s
Shelley dead of cancer almost six years to the day
my voice miraculously resurrected
here I am at a music festival
a poet again

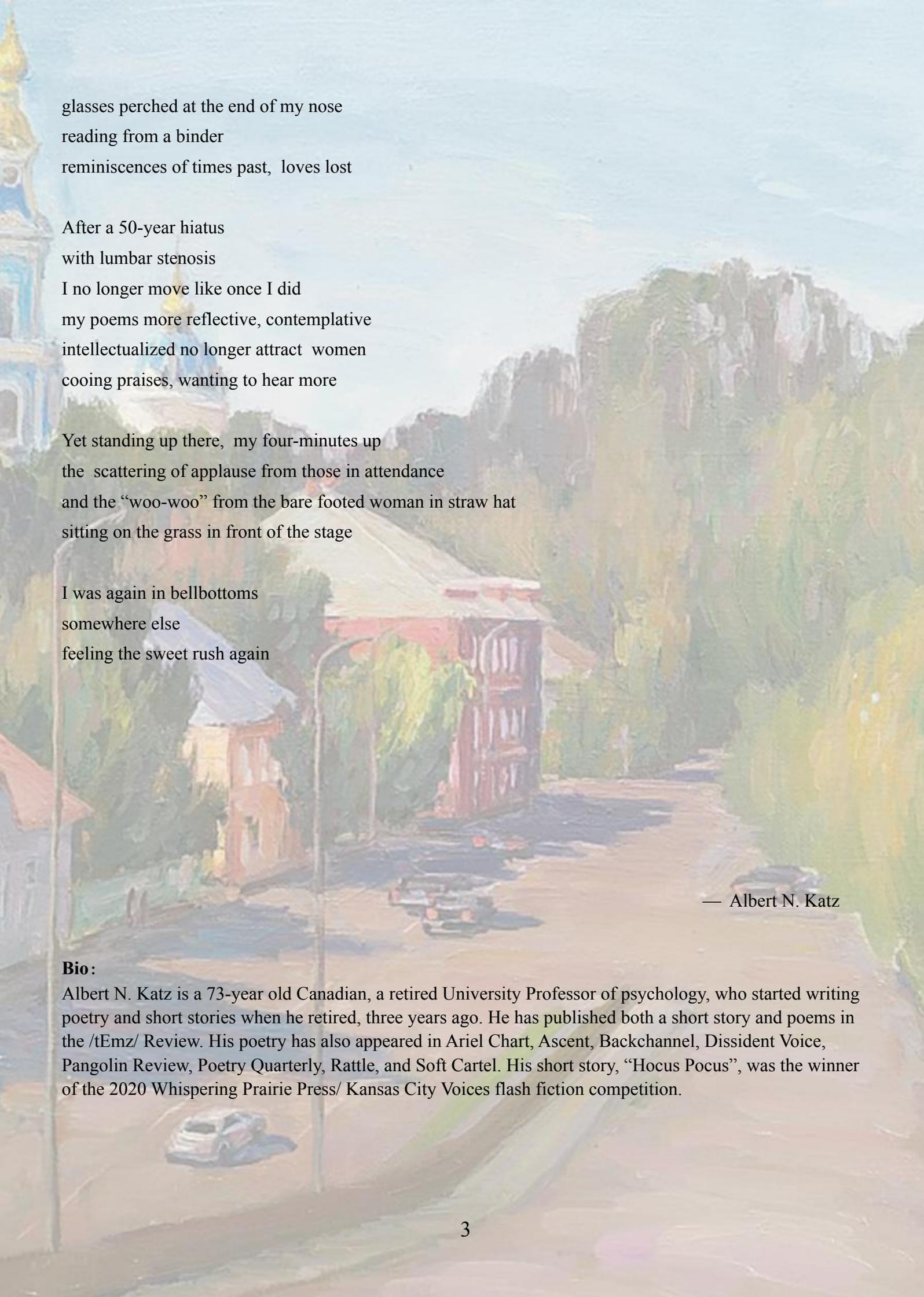
waiting near the "community stage"
while guitar playing duos do a pretty good job with
folk songs from the 60

We've been squeezed into
a 30-minute slot between the musical acts
which means, given that there are 7 of us,
each poet has four or so minutes on stage
with which to spill our guts

And there was someone named, I think, Kate,
a youngster, who owned the stage for those few minutes
recited her poems from memory

wistfully I felt
the flashes of beauty in her poems
saw how she moved like a rock star

When my name was called
I stood static in front of the mic
beardless, hair receding,



glasses perched at the end of my nose
reading from a binder
reminiscences of times past, loves lost

After a 50-year hiatus
with lumbar stenosis
I no longer move like once I did
my poems more reflective, contemplative
intellectualized no longer attract women
cooing praises, wanting to hear more

Yet standing up there, my four-minutes up
the scattering of applause from those in attendance
and the “woo-woo” from the bare footed woman in straw hat
sitting on the grass in front of the stage

I was again in bellbottoms
somewhere else
feeling the sweet rush again

— Albert N. Katz

Bio :

Albert N. Katz is a 73-year old Canadian, a retired University Professor of psychology, who started writing poetry and short stories when he retired, three years ago. He has published both a short story and poems in the /tEmz/ Review. His poetry has also appeared in Ariel Chart, Ascent, Backchannel, Dissident Voice, Pangolin Review, Poetry Quarterly, Rattle, and Soft Cartel. His short story, “Hocus Pocus”, was the winner of the 2020 Whispering Prairie Press/ Kansas City Voices flash fiction competition.

All Creatures Great and Small

From here,
the desk lamp's like a sun, the scratched tabletop a continent.

I'm tiny as a thimble,
viewpoint of a housefly: look, a looming demigod,
mad poet tapping strident sounds into my elfin ears.

What's it like, you ask,
this wee life of mine, living in so limited a way,
never to leave,
or spend whatever wealth was given to me by the Creator,
who made all creatures great and small?

Maybe I was a mistake;

perhaps He's distracted as oceans die, and no one seems
to link *a big sky to a small stream*, the withering
of trout and eel from waterborne disease or toxic waste.

Yet from my petite vantage,
I am not helpless, nor am I limited;
blessed with the beauty of my size, gravity does not burden me.

Lightweight and portable,
I could ride in your pocket, witness the wider world you see daily.

But instead,
I'll stay here, contented, as sunshine drapes across the room
in a gauzy curtain,

while on cloudy days, a chiaroscuro
of shadow and light drifts asymmetrically over plate-glass windows.

(thanks to "A Wreath to the Fish" by Nancy Willard)

Salt Seeking

Clinging casually
to the virtually
vertical
wall
of
the Diga del Cingino dam,

wild mountain goats
lick the stonework,

seeking salt,

and maybe,
tasty lichen
off its downstream face.

Accustomed
to rocky regions
and rough terrain,

Alpine ibex
are not bothered by

the steepness
of the slope,
as they nibble
on these welcome treats.

They could fall
at any time,

standing at impossible
angles,
without crampons,



boots,
or other manmade tools.

They don't look down—

just trust
their natural footing
and, apparently,

their one true purpose.

— Alison Jennings

Bio:

Alison Jennings is a Seattle-based poet who's written poetry since her ninth year, but only began to submit her work after retiring from public school teaching. Recently, she has had 45 poems published, won 3rd place or Honorable Mention in several contests, and was a semi-finalist in the Joy Harjo contest for Cutthroat Magazine. Please visit her website at <https://sites.google.com/view/airandfirepoet/home>.

Migration North

I helped my grandma down the salted walk,
into the van that Uncle Dallas warmed
ten minutes ago. I laid the hickory cane
across her lap, kissed her cheek, and told her
I loved her before sliding shut the door.

My wife has given to me a family
tradition of watching departing guests—
waving until they're out of sight—a rite
of Southern courtesy and contemplation
I practice now without a coat or hat.

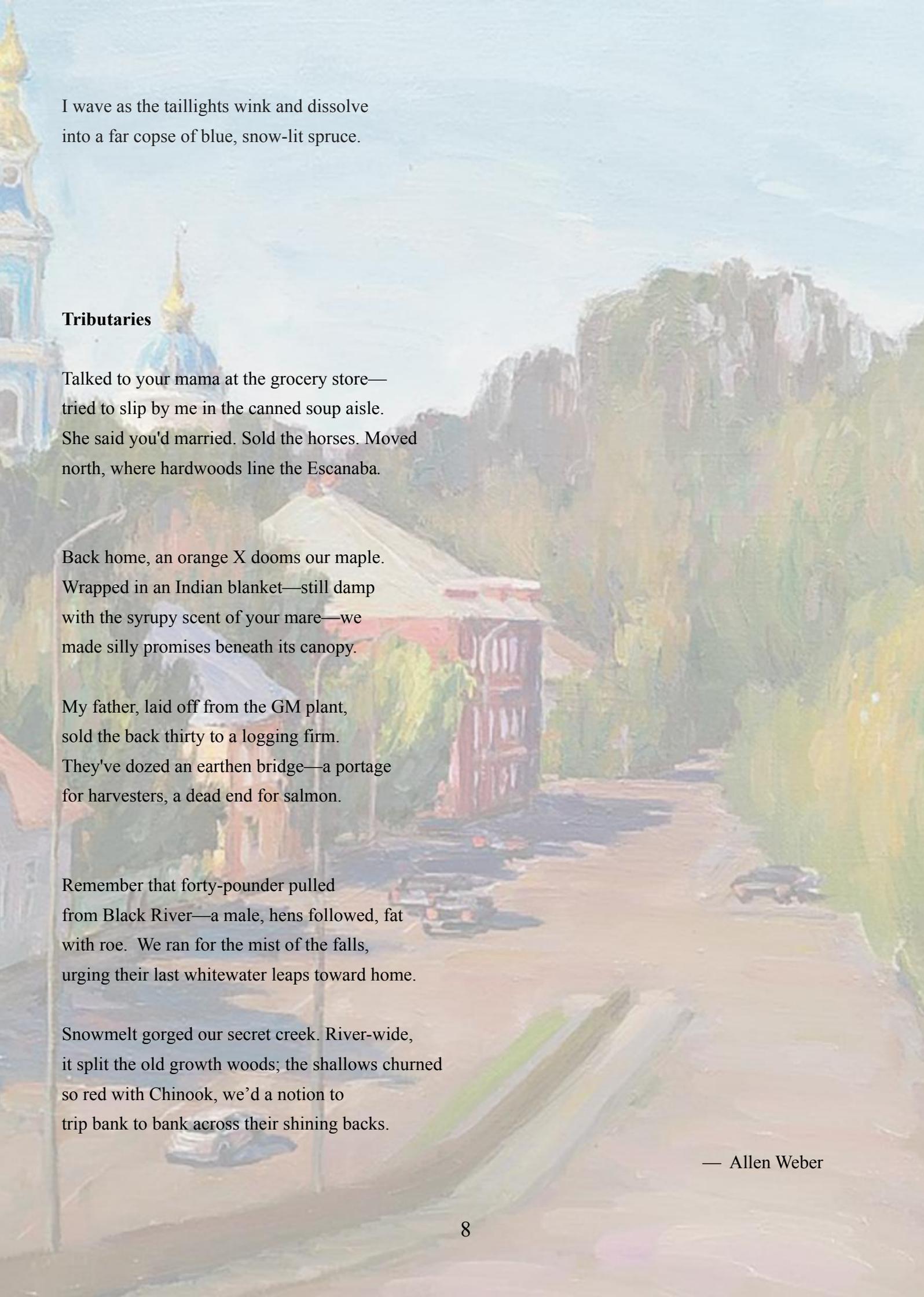
I'll wait till distance veils the engine's hum
and I can sense the murmur of my heart.
Lake-effect snow tumbles, kisses my nose;
another cloud—swirling silver—envelops,
briefly, Venus and then the waxing moon.

In shared stillness, the wilder residents
of our refuge—Canadian geese and
mallards—huddle in bulrush near the pond
where the ice is thin. Each has reason to
endure the splendor of wintering here.

Consider the peevish pair of mute swans:
the cob, waving a mangled wing, postures
and hisses to keep his pen. Why does she
embrace the practice of monogamy?

By acts, not reason, they're most inspired.

By the fire, my Virginia girl enthralls
her grateful in-laws with musical wit.
Laughter rises with smoke from the chimney.



I wave as the taillights wink and dissolve
into a far copse of blue, snow-lit spruce.

Tributaries

Talked to your mama at the grocery store—
tried to slip by me in the canned soup aisle.
She said you'd married. Sold the horses. Moved
north, where hardwoods line the Escanaba.

Back home, an orange X dooms our maple.
Wrapped in an Indian blanket—still damp
with the syrupy scent of your mare—we
made silly promises beneath its canopy.

My father, laid off from the GM plant,
sold the back thirty to a logging firm.
They've dozed an earthen bridge—a portage
for harvesters, a dead end for salmon.

Remember that forty-pounder pulled
from Black River—a male, hens followed, fat
with roe. We ran for the mist of the falls,
urging their last whitewater leaps toward home.

Snowmelt gorged our secret creek. River-wide,
it split the old growth woods; the shallows churned
so red with Chinook, we'd a notion to
trip bank to bank across their shining backs.

— Allen Weber

Bio:

Allen lives in Hampton, Virginia with his wife and sons. His poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies—including *Changing Harm to Harmony: Bullies and Bystanders Project*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Fourth River*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, *The Quotable*, *Terrain*, and *Up the Staircase Quarterly*.



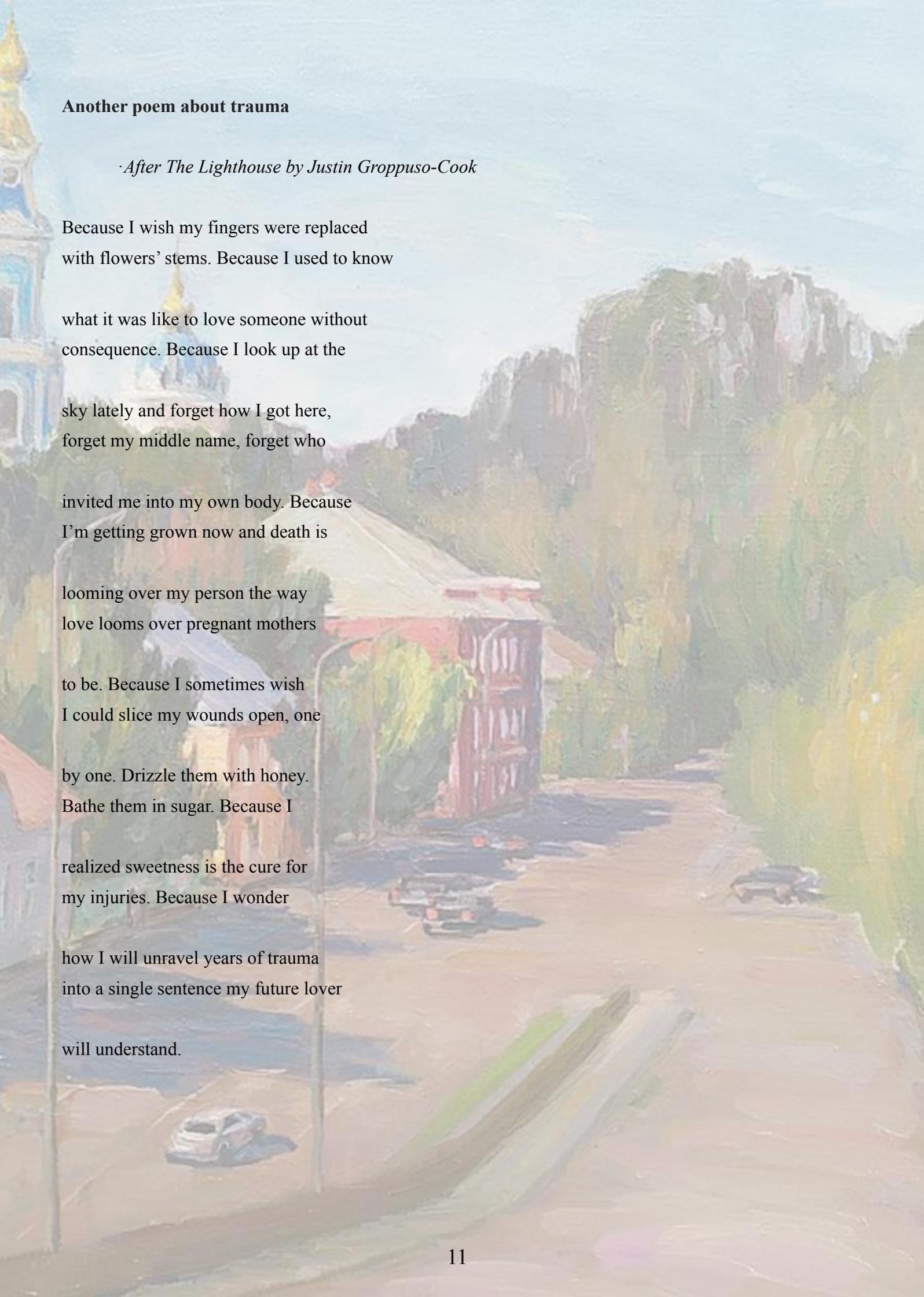
[Sunday]

he was a sailor
pouring the bedsheets with ocean,
used to leave at noon and returned during ebb tides, schools of fish
in his eyes.
on blue moon nights, women's hearts
would beat for him while he dragged
a boat of sadness along the littoral, he smiled
and they broke like waves amid the tranquil breeze
of a man without his catch of fish.
I had cried in surges
my pain
was drops
rolling towards the sea while the women
cleaned orgasms with sand.
He would come into land to fall in love,
and I watched him, crazed and veiny
upon a blue ocean
making love to the women of the beach oblivious
of how much I could have swam for him.
But this body
was born at North
in the fearless Atlantic waters during spring tides
restless
have tried to translate their heat
but even as a fisherman you are worthless.
I can't return home,
and unable to dream on firm land
I had left without moorings or words
riding a cold wave of love,
for I knew that after you the water would never again glaze my bed sheets.

— Ana Marta Fortuna

Bio:

Ana Marta Fortuna was born in Portugal in 1980. She is a psychologist, a poet, and passionate about photography. She is the author of "O Peso da Nuvem" her first poetry book edited by Alma Azul in Portugal and has two original poems published with Ajar Press in Vietnam. She's often found living in some random city near the sea.



Another poem about trauma

After The Lighthouse by Justin Groppuso-Cook

Because I wish my fingers were replaced
with flowers' stems. Because I used to know

what it was like to love someone without
consequence. Because I look up at the

sky lately and forget how I got here,
forget my middle name, forget who

invited me into my own body. Because
I'm getting grown now and death is

looming over my person the way
love looms over pregnant mothers

to be. Because I sometimes wish
I could slice my wounds open, one

by one. Drizzle them with honey.
Bathe them in sugar. Because I

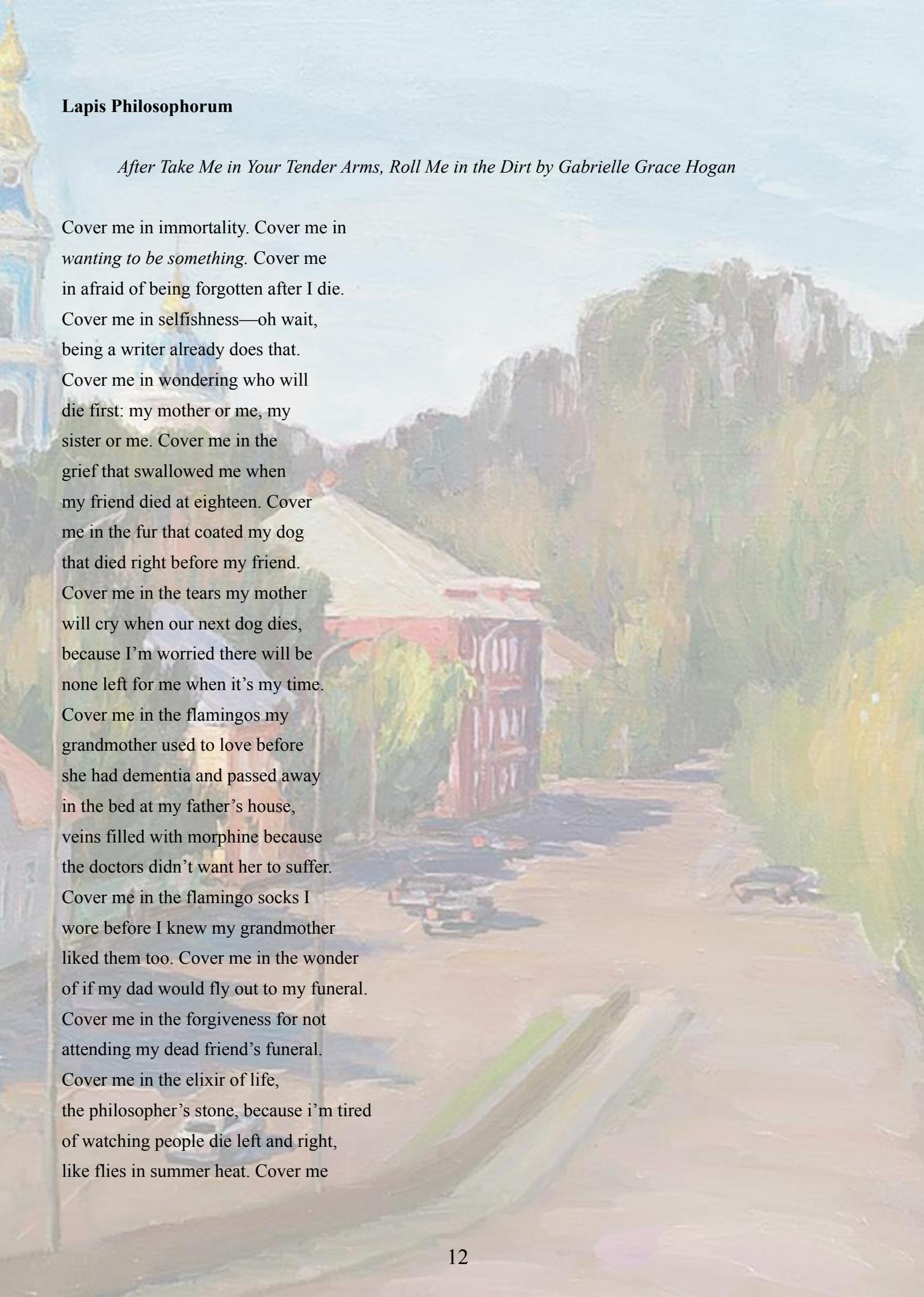
realized sweetness is the cure for
my injuries. Because I wonder

how I will unravel years of trauma
into a single sentence my future lover

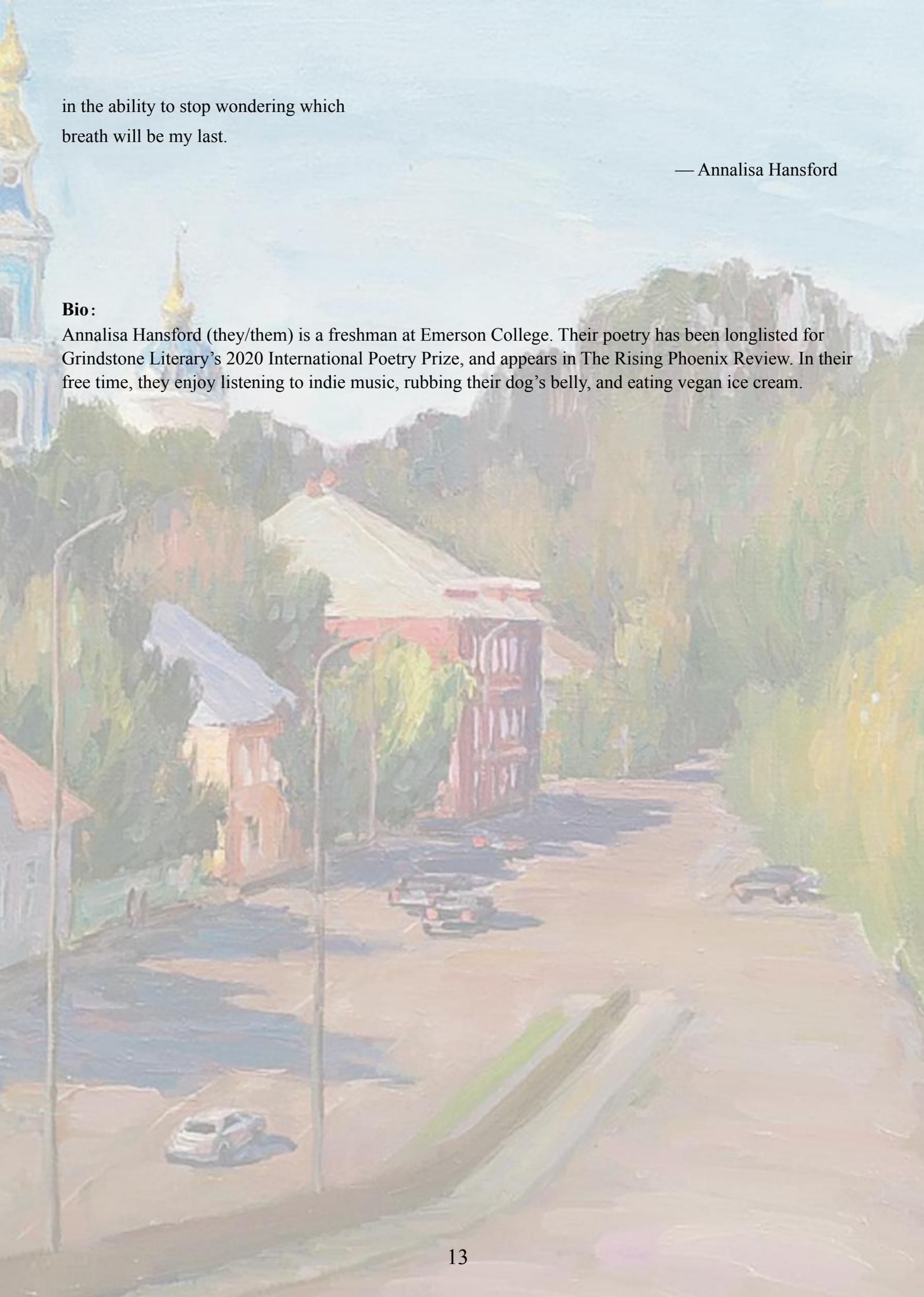
will understand.

Lapis Philosophorum

After Take Me in Your Tender Arms, Roll Me in the Dirt by Gabrielle Grace Hogan



Cover me in immortality. Cover me in
wanting to be something. Cover me
in afraid of being forgotten after I die.
Cover me in selfishness—oh wait,
being a writer already does that.
Cover me in wondering who will
die first: my mother or me, my
sister or me. Cover me in the
grief that swallowed me when
my friend died at eighteen. Cover
me in the fur that coated my dog
that died right before my friend.
Cover me in the tears my mother
will cry when our next dog dies,
because I'm worried there will be
none left for me when it's my time.
Cover me in the flamingos my
grandmother used to love before
she had dementia and passed away
in the bed at my father's house,
veins filled with morphine because
the doctors didn't want her to suffer.
Cover me in the flamingo socks I
wore before I knew my grandmother
liked them too. Cover me in the wonder
of if my dad would fly out to my funeral.
Cover me in the forgiveness for not
attending my dead friend's funeral.
Cover me in the elixir of life,
the philosopher's stone, because i'm tired
of watching people die left and right,
like flies in summer heat. Cover me



in the ability to stop wondering which
breath will be my last.

— Annalisa Hansford

Bio:

Annalisa Hansford (they/them) is a freshman at Emerson College. Their poetry has been longlisted for Grindstone Literary's 2020 International Poetry Prize, and appears in *The Rising Phoenix Review*. In their free time, they enjoy listening to indie music, rubbing their dog's belly, and eating vegan ice cream.

The Warrior

After school my precious little son
races in the door, blue eyes lighting
up the bleak October day. *Hi Mom,*
he says and filters past my kiss, runs off
to find his little sister. Behind him comes
the older girl I pay to walk him back
and forth, and then a scraggly adolescent
boy, gaunt jawline speaking poverty.
He's going to be replacing me, the girl
declares, *I don't want to do it anymore.*
The sky outside the window dulls to grey
against the brittle leaves. I know the boy-
rough family. He seems to catch my thought,
and seeks to reassure. *I'm tough,* he says.
My dad can't beat me anymore. I punched
him back. He's stopped. A fleeting flake of sun
sparks flinty triumph in his eyes as I
formulate my response
... I... I already have a backup ... but thanks.
I'm sure he sees what's on my face. The hint
of sunlight disappears as he slump-shuffles
from the room. I feel relieved, then flat.
It's true, there is another boy to ask-
good family. I tell myself, *no mother*
in her right mind would... must put my child
first. And it is so. And yet, the grey
eyes haunt, the thin mouth finding strength
for warrior truth, a seeking to protect
and not provoke, a needing someone kind
to see him straight. And I wonder what it is
he takes away into that cold and bleak
October day.

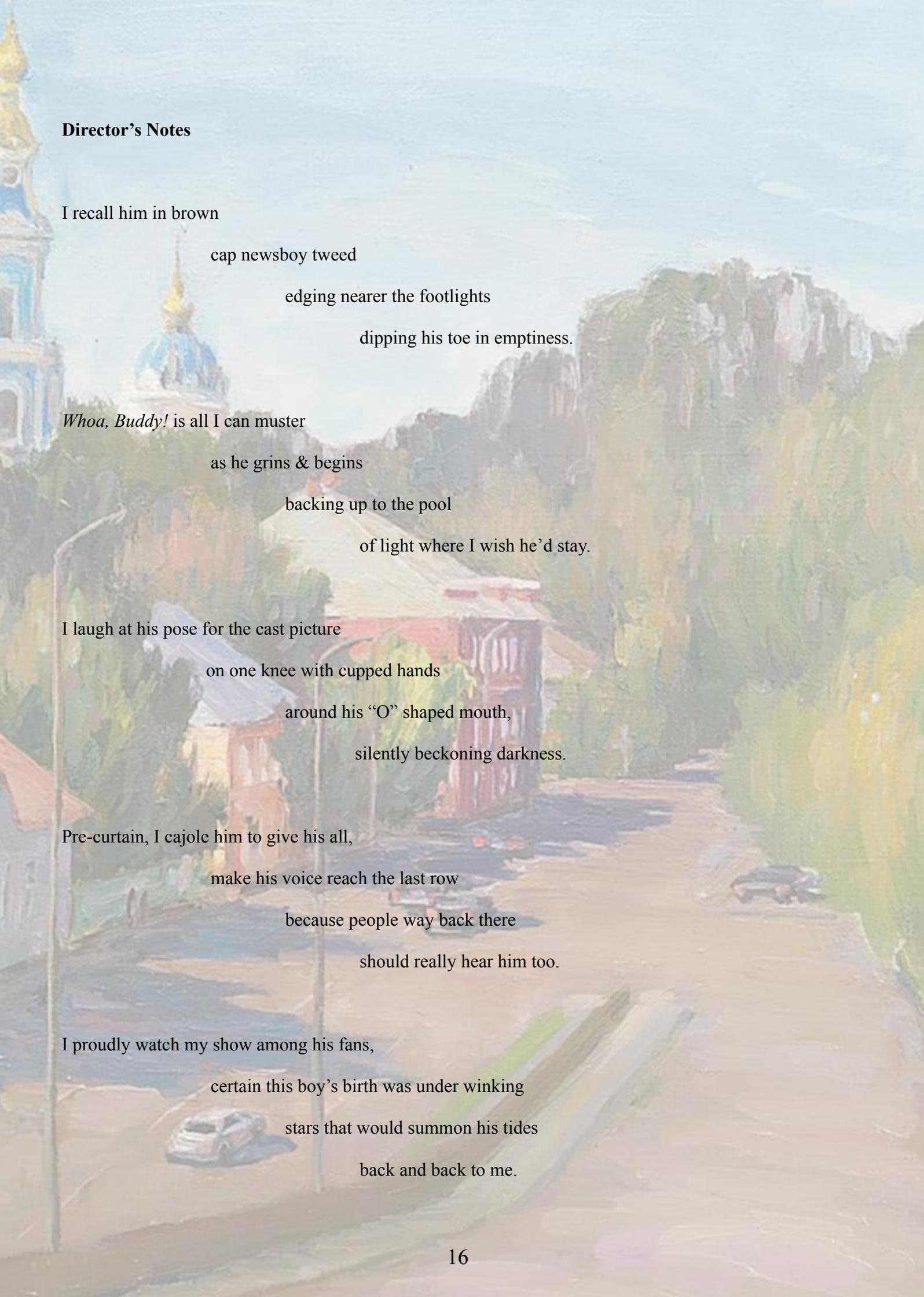
Rainy Day

The rain is mumbling on the roof,
a steady cadence, punctuated by
staccato eave-drippings. It rumbles
like a distant emotion through
muscle, organ, bone. I sigh
to ground, will miss this soothing
pabulum sound when it stops and all
the restless furies wash back in.
I admit, I like to sit in this absolution
pen in hand, sounding the interior
for sunken glimmerings. No sun
to call me. No warmth to tease off
the cozy blanket of indolent whimsey.

— Carol Casey

Bio :

Carol Casey lives in Blyth, Ontario, Canada. Her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *The Prairie Journal*, *The Anti-Langourous Project*, *Please See Me*, *Front Porch Review*, *Cypress*, *Vita Brevis*, *Blue Unicorn* and others, including a number of anthologies, most recently, *We Are One: Poems From the Pandemic* and the *TL;DR Hope Anthology*.



Director's Notes

I recall him in brown

cap newsboy tweed

edging nearer the footlights

dipping his toe in emptiness.

Whoa, Buddy! is all I can muster

as he grins & begins

backing up to the pool

of light where I wish he'd stay.

I laugh at his pose for the cast picture

on one knee with cupped hands

around his "O" shaped mouth,

silently beckoning darkness.

Pre-curtain, I cajole him to give his all,

make his voice reach the last row

because people way back there

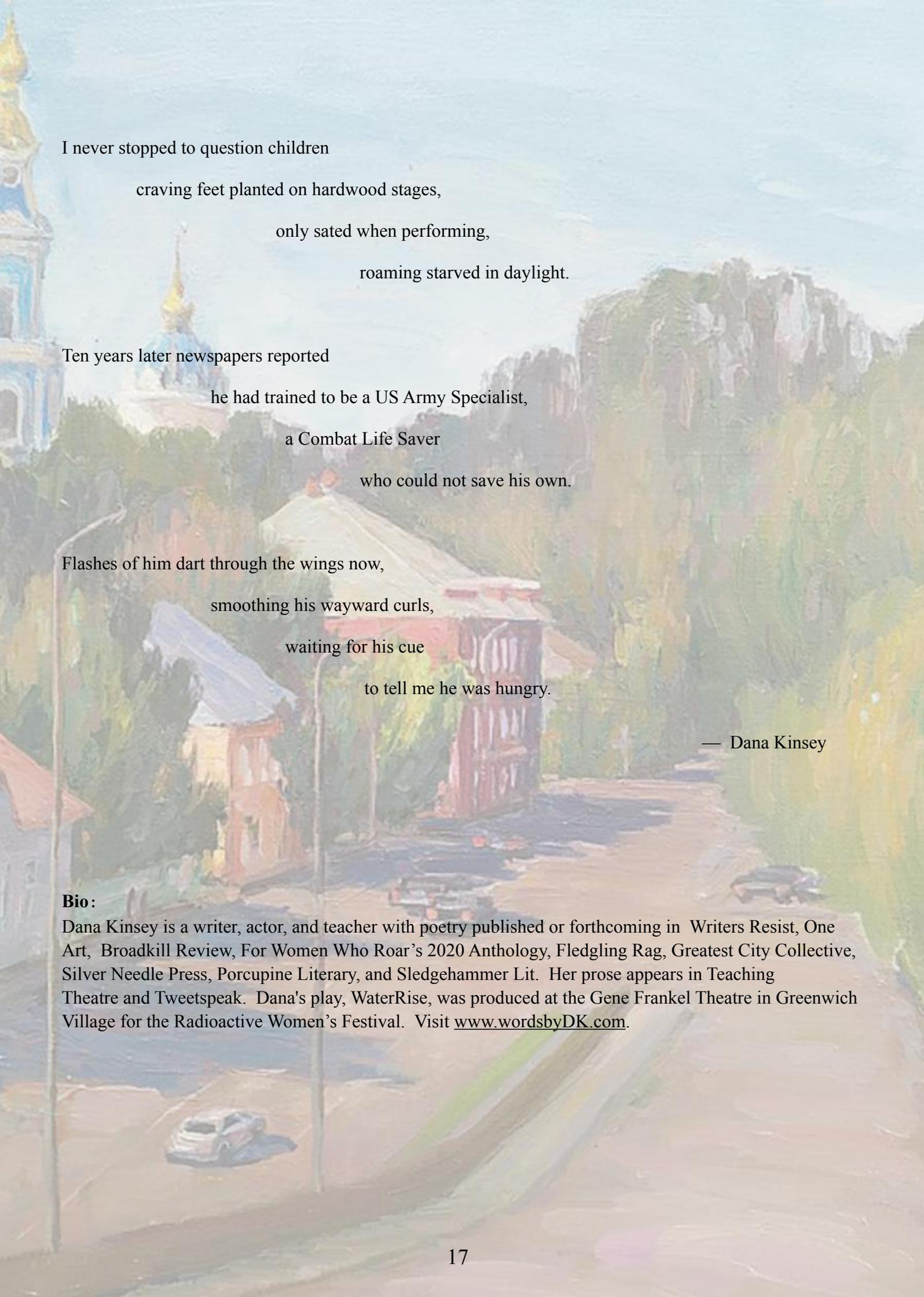
should really hear him too.

I proudly watch my show among his fans,

certain this boy's birth was under winking

stars that would summon his tides

back and back to me.



I never stopped to question children
craving feet planted on hardwood stages,
only sated when performing,
roaming starved in daylight.

Ten years later newspapers reported
he had trained to be a US Army Specialist,
a Combat Life Saver
who could not save his own.

Flashes of him dart through the wings now,
smoothing his wayward curls,
waiting for his cue
to tell me he was hungry.

— Dana Kinsey

Bio :

Dana Kinsey is a writer, actor, and teacher with poetry published or forthcoming in Writers Resist, One Art, Broadkill Review, For Women Who Roar's 2020 Anthology, Fledgling Rag, Greatest City Collective, Silver Needle Press, Porcupine Literary, and Sledgehammer Lit. Her prose appears in Teaching Theatre and Tweetspeak. Dana's play, WaterRise, was produced at the Gene Frankel Theatre in Greenwich Village for the Radioactive Women's Festival. Visit www.wordsbyDK.com.

Why We Are Here

My awareness opens like leaves on
the first warm day of May with

so much assuredness that life will
go on, despite the sunless chill

of the months gone by.

Where there was a vacancy,

there is something added, something
to help us carry on and remember

why we are here, to be ambitious in
tomorrow, to praise the stardust

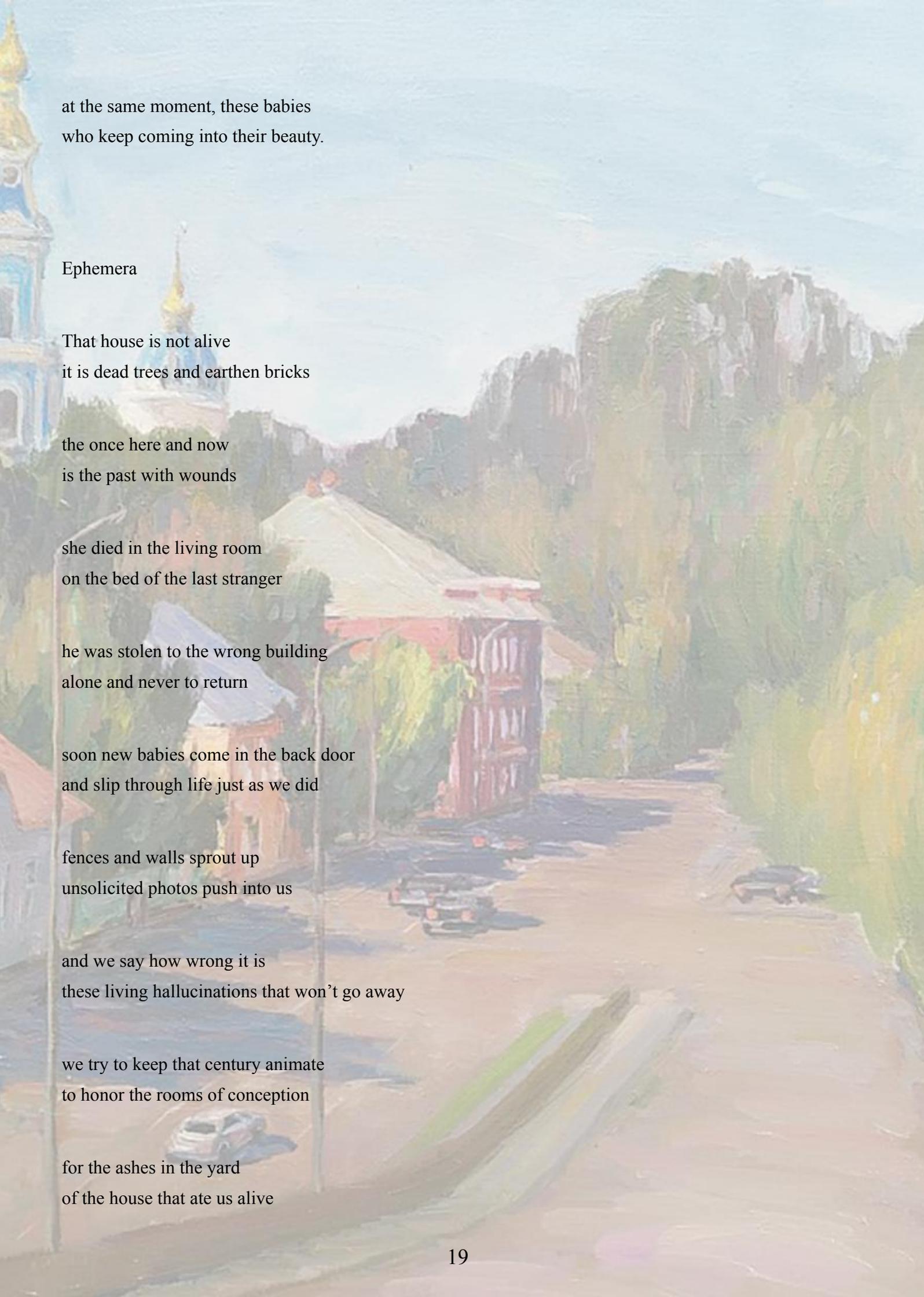
and its Maker, and all who went
before us. Like graffiti on our skin

we can plainly see the truth. We visit
the garden and notice the flowers

have colors we have never seen, stems
that have expanded overnight.

It all happens frighteningly fast,
this breathing from sunlight

to moonlight, this every day
with its time, obsolete and everlasting

The background is a painting of a street scene. On the left, a church with a blue and gold dome is partially visible. The street is paved and has several cars parked along the side. In the distance, there are mountains and a large, multi-story building. The overall style is impressionistic with visible brushstrokes.

at the same moment, these babies
who keep coming into their beauty.

Ephemera

That house is not alive
it is dead trees and earthen bricks

the once here and now
is the past with wounds

she died in the living room
on the bed of the last stranger

he was stolen to the wrong building
alone and never to return

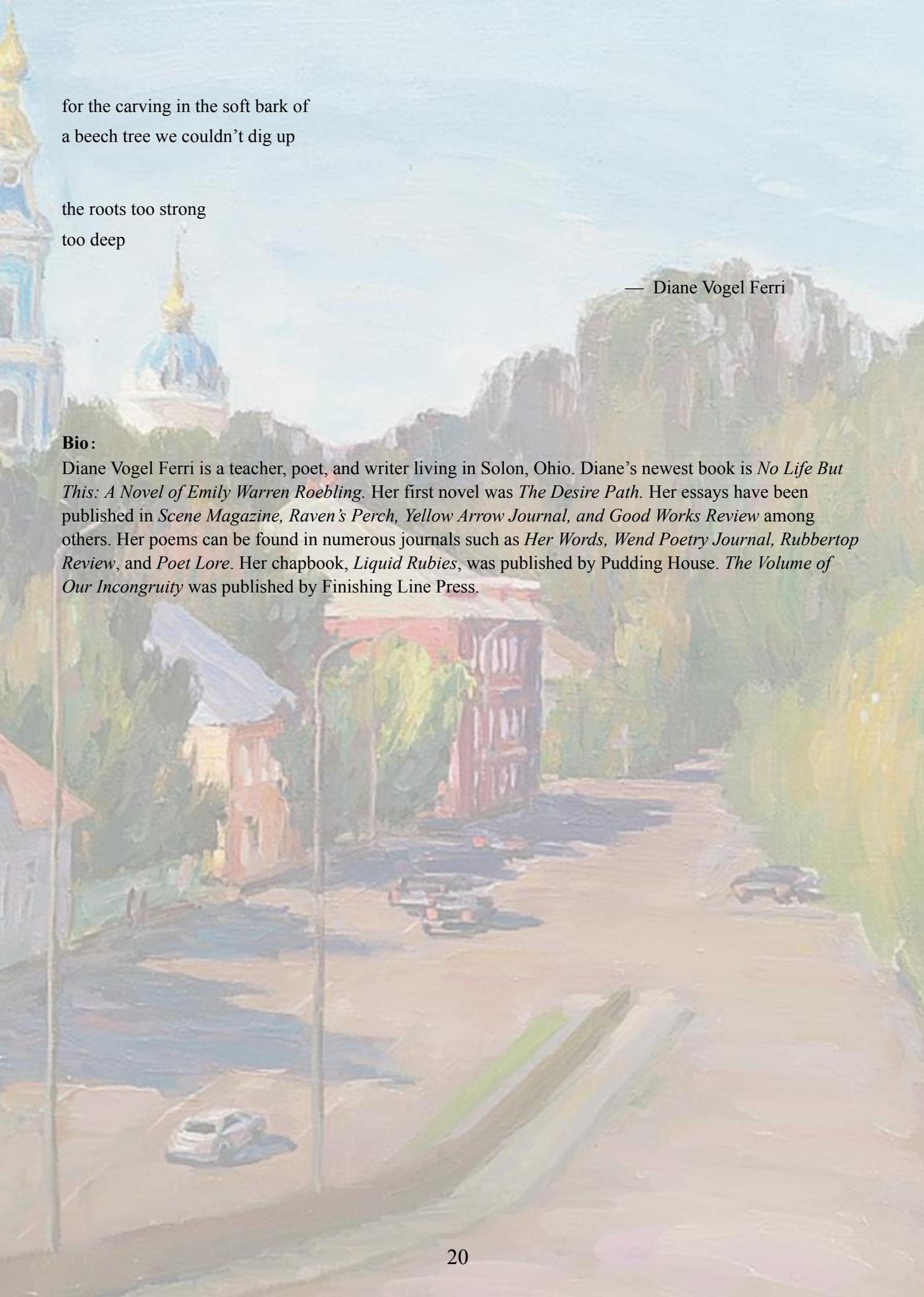
soon new babies come in the back door
and slip through life just as we did

fences and walls sprout up
unsolicited photos push into us

and we say how wrong it is
these living hallucinations that won't go away

we try to keep that century animate
to honor the rooms of conception

for the ashes in the yard
of the house that ate us alive

A painting of a street scene. On the left, a church with a blue and gold dome is visible. In the center, a dirt road leads towards a large, weathered wooden barn. A car is parked on the road in the foreground. The background shows rolling hills under a light sky.

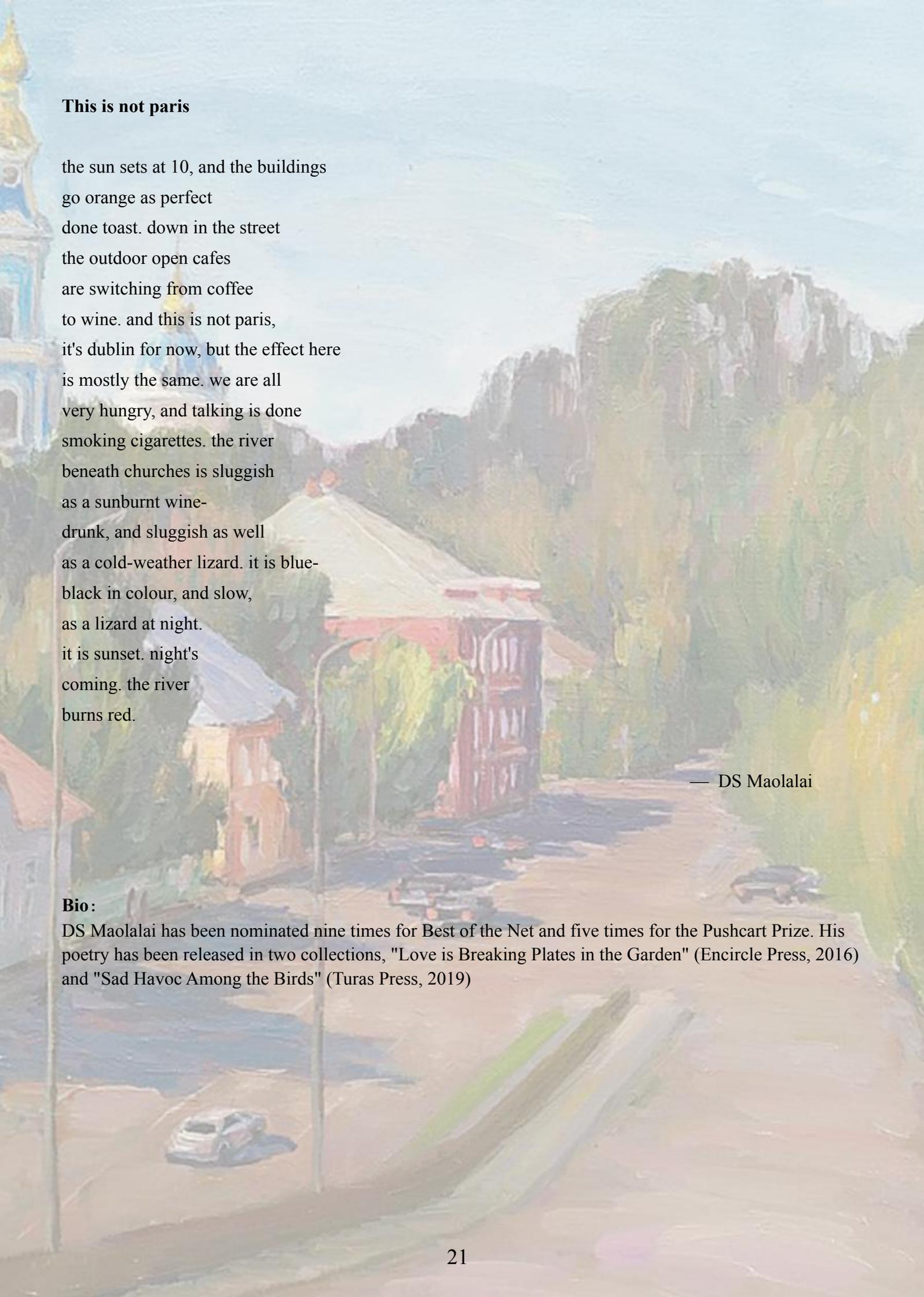
for the carving in the soft bark of
a beech tree we couldn't dig up

the roots too strong
too deep

— Diane Vogel Ferri

Bio:

Diane Vogel Ferri is a teacher, poet, and writer living in Solon, Ohio. Diane's newest book is *No Life But This: A Novel of Emily Warren Roebling*. Her first novel was *The Desire Path*. Her essays have been published in *Scene Magazine*, *Raven's Perch*, *Yellow Arrow Journal*, and *Good Works Review* among others. Her poems can be found in numerous journals such as *Her Words*, *Wend Poetry Journal*, *Rubbertop Review*, and *Poet Lore*. Her chapbook, *Liquid Rubies*, was published by Pudding House. *The Volume of Our Incongruity* was published by Finishing Line Press.



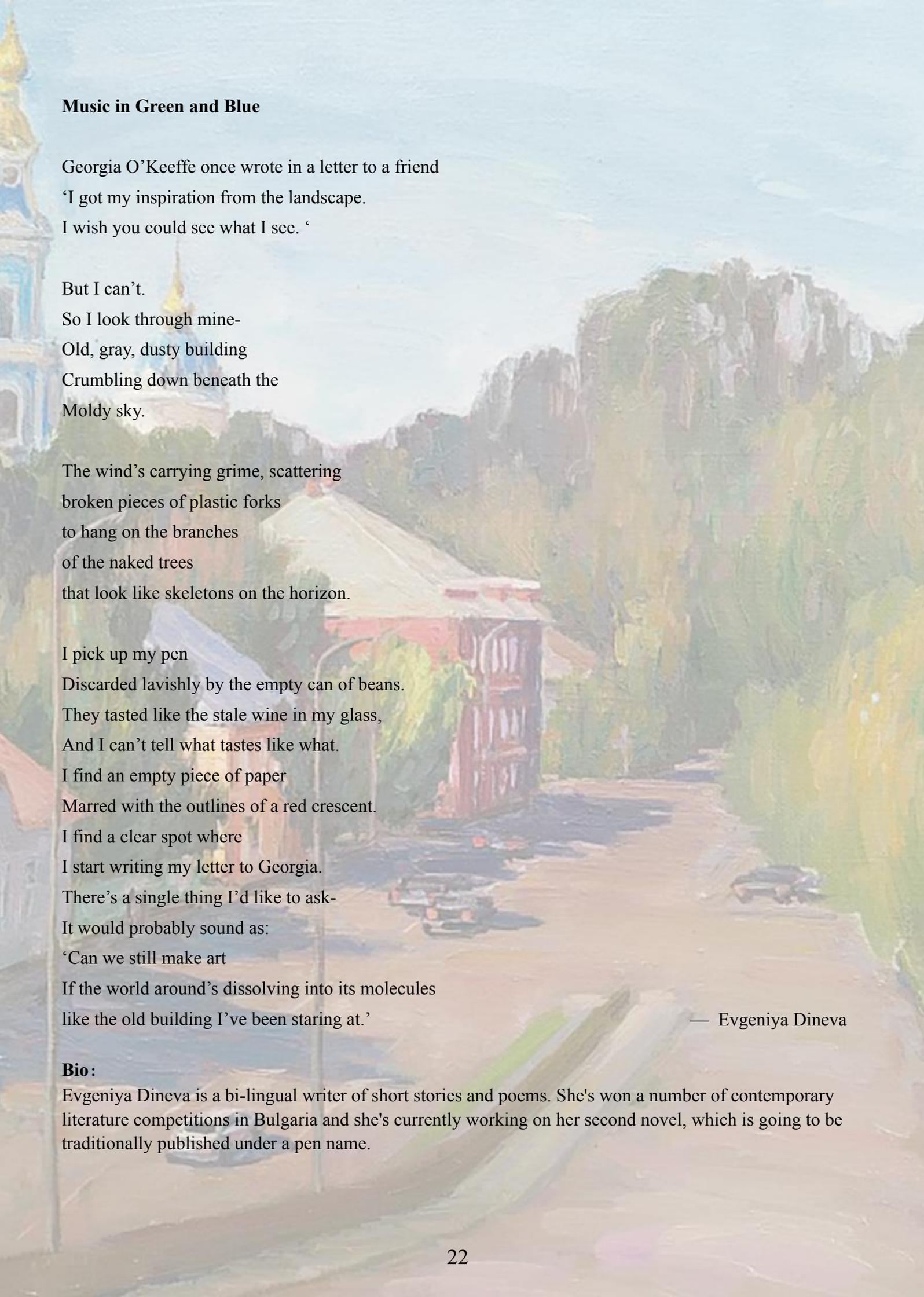
This is not paris

the sun sets at 10, and the buildings
go orange as perfect
done toast. down in the street
the outdoor open cafes
are switching from coffee
to wine. and this is not paris,
it's dublin for now, but the effect here
is mostly the same. we are all
very hungry, and talking is done
smoking cigarettes. the river
beneath churches is sluggish
as a sunburnt wine-
drunk, and sluggish as well
as a cold-weather lizard. it is blue-
black in colour, and slow,
as a lizard at night.
it is sunset. night's
coming. the river
burns red.

— DS Maolalai

Bio:

DS Maolalai has been nominated nine times for Best of the Net and five times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019)

The background of the page is a painting of a street scene. On the left, a church with a tall, ornate spire is visible. The street is paved and has a few cars parked on the side. In the distance, there are mountains and a hazy sky. The overall style is impressionistic with soft colors and visible brushstrokes.

Music in Green and Blue

Georgia O’Keeffe once wrote in a letter to a friend
‘I got my inspiration from the landscape.
I wish you could see what I see.’

But I can’t.
So I look through mine-
Old, gray, dusty building
Crumbling down beneath the
Moldy sky.

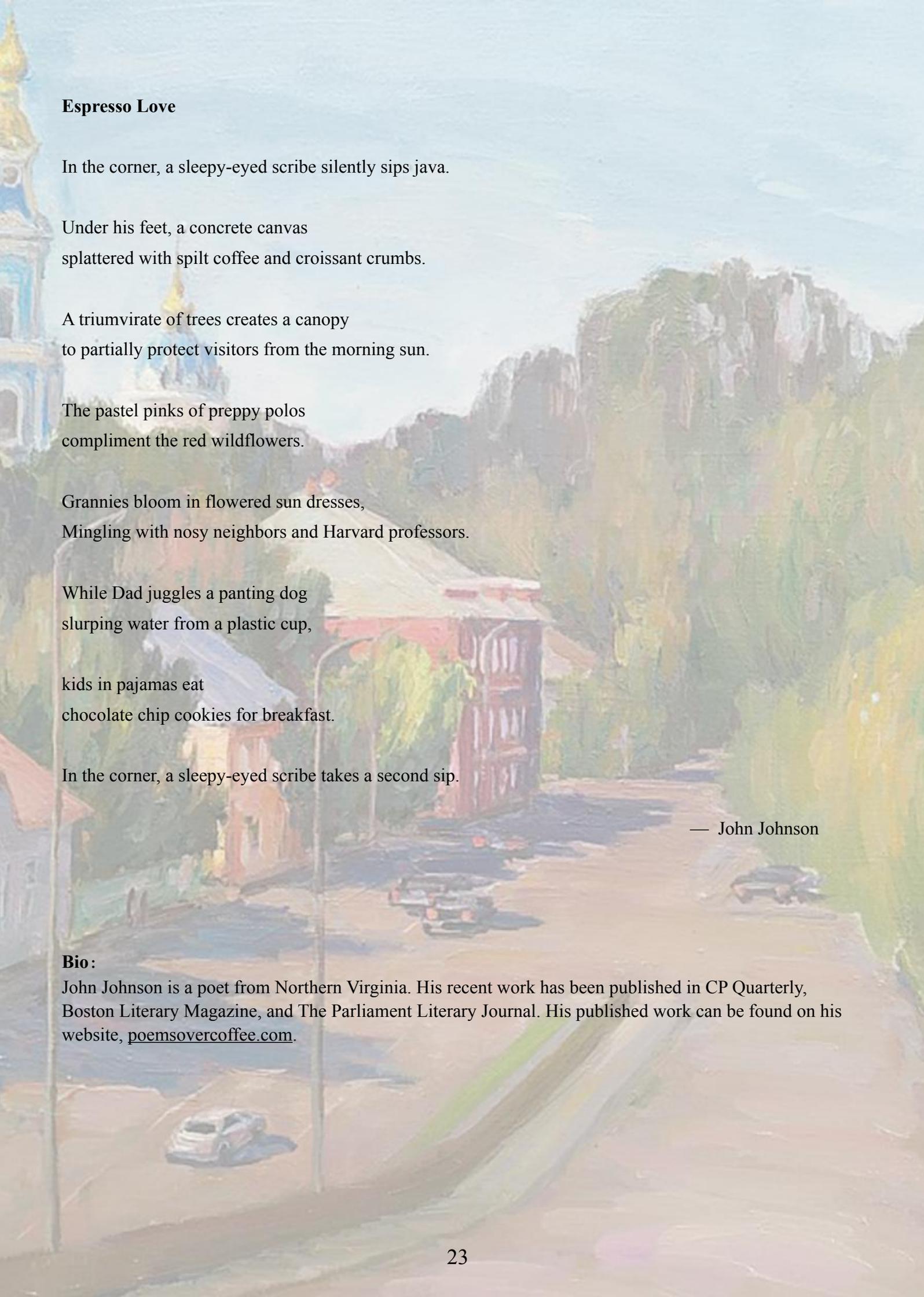
The wind’s carrying grime, scattering
broken pieces of plastic forks
to hang on the branches
of the naked trees
that look like skeletons on the horizon.

I pick up my pen
Discarded lavishly by the empty can of beans.
They tasted like the stale wine in my glass,
And I can’t tell what tastes like what.
I find an empty piece of paper
Marred with the outlines of a red crescent.
I find a clear spot where
I start writing my letter to Georgia.
There’s a single thing I’d like to ask-
It would probably sound as:
‘Can we still make art
If the world around’s dissolving into its molecules
like the old building I’ve been staring at.’

— Evgeniya Dineva

Bio :

Evgeniya Dineva is a bi-lingual writer of short stories and poems. She's won a number of contemporary literature competitions in Bulgaria and she's currently working on her second novel, which is going to be traditionally published under a pen name.



Espresso Love

In the corner, a sleepy-eyed scribe silently sips java.

Under his feet, a concrete canvas
splattered with spilt coffee and croissant crumbs.

A triumvirate of trees creates a canopy
to partially protect visitors from the morning sun.

The pastel pinks of preppy polos
compliment the red wildflowers.

Grannies bloom in flowered sun dresses,
Mingling with nosy neighbors and Harvard professors.

While Dad juggles a panting dog
slurping water from a plastic cup,

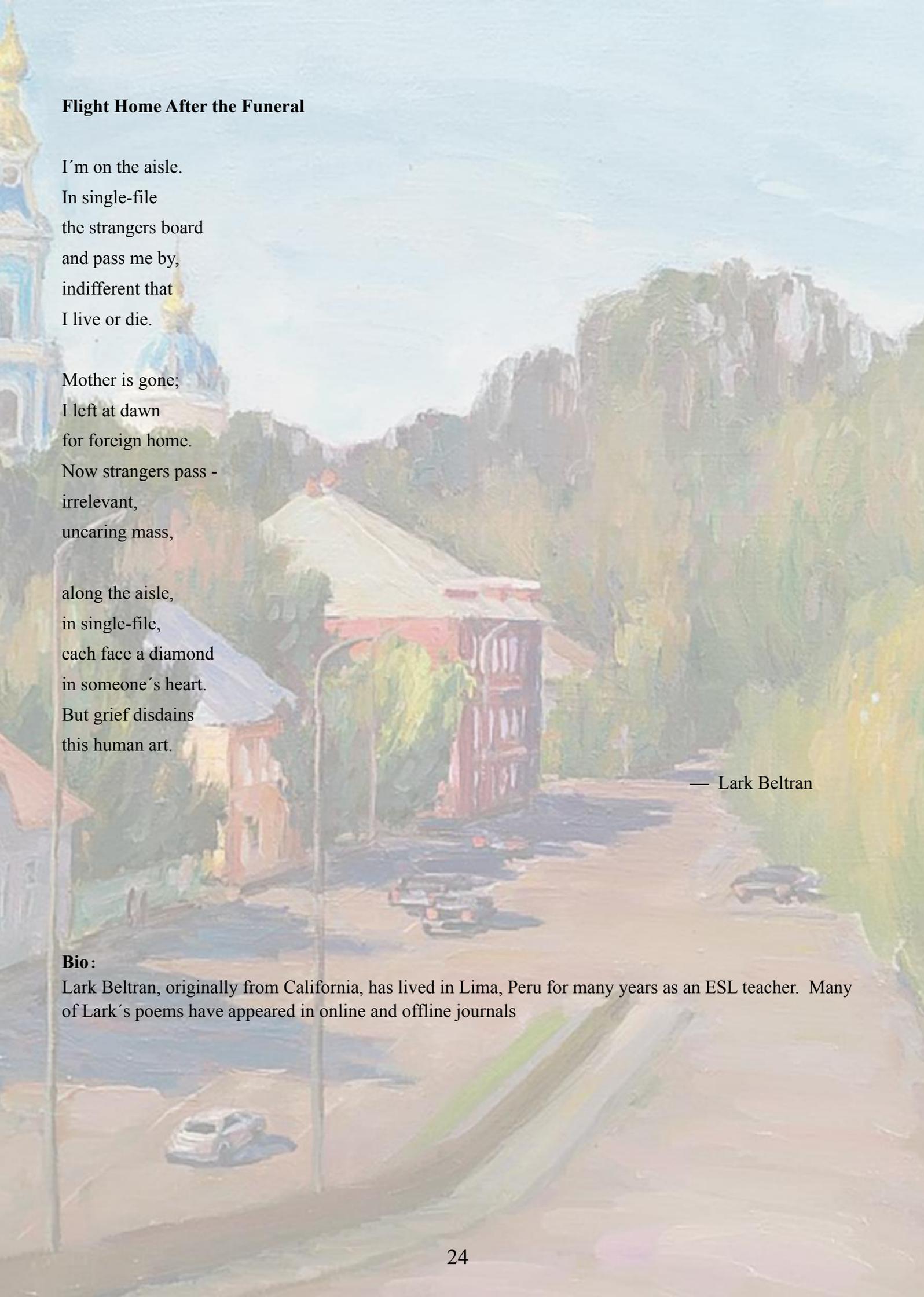
kids in pajamas eat
chocolate chip cookies for breakfast.

In the corner, a sleepy-eyed scribe takes a second sip.

— John Johnson

Bio :

John Johnson is a poet from Northern Virginia. His recent work has been published in CP Quarterly, Boston Literary Magazine, and The Parliament Literary Journal. His published work can be found on his website, poemsovercoffee.com.



Flight Home After the Funeral

I'm on the aisle.
In single-file
the strangers board
and pass me by,
indifferent that
I live or die.

Mother is gone;
I left at dawn
for foreign home.
Now strangers pass -
irrelevant,
uncaring mass,

along the aisle,
in single-file,
each face a diamond
in someone's heart.
But grief disdains
this human art.

— Lark Beltran

Bio:

Lark Beltran, originally from California, has lived in Lima, Peru for many years as an ESL teacher. Many of Lark's poems have appeared in online and offline journals

This is My Body, Broken for Who?

“What do we think? God left the oven on and hasn’t come back from work yet?”

I heard my own voice shout, startling me awake. I’m in bed and my big toe,

the one I destroyed right before my first trip to Europe as a teenager, is pulsing pain with every heartbeat. I start brainstorming ways to stop my heart, which

freaks it out and makes it pound faster.

Can they do toe replacements yet?

My mom had her hip done fairly easily years ago but that was for a genetically malformed socket.

This toe problem is just how I discovered self-harm. I’d clipped it too short, trapped the edge of the skin attaching the nail to the nail bed between the blades

of the clippers and yanked until I got it all, even though it bled instantly and for two days.

I didn’t know what I was doing.

But it was a distraction I mistook for relief;

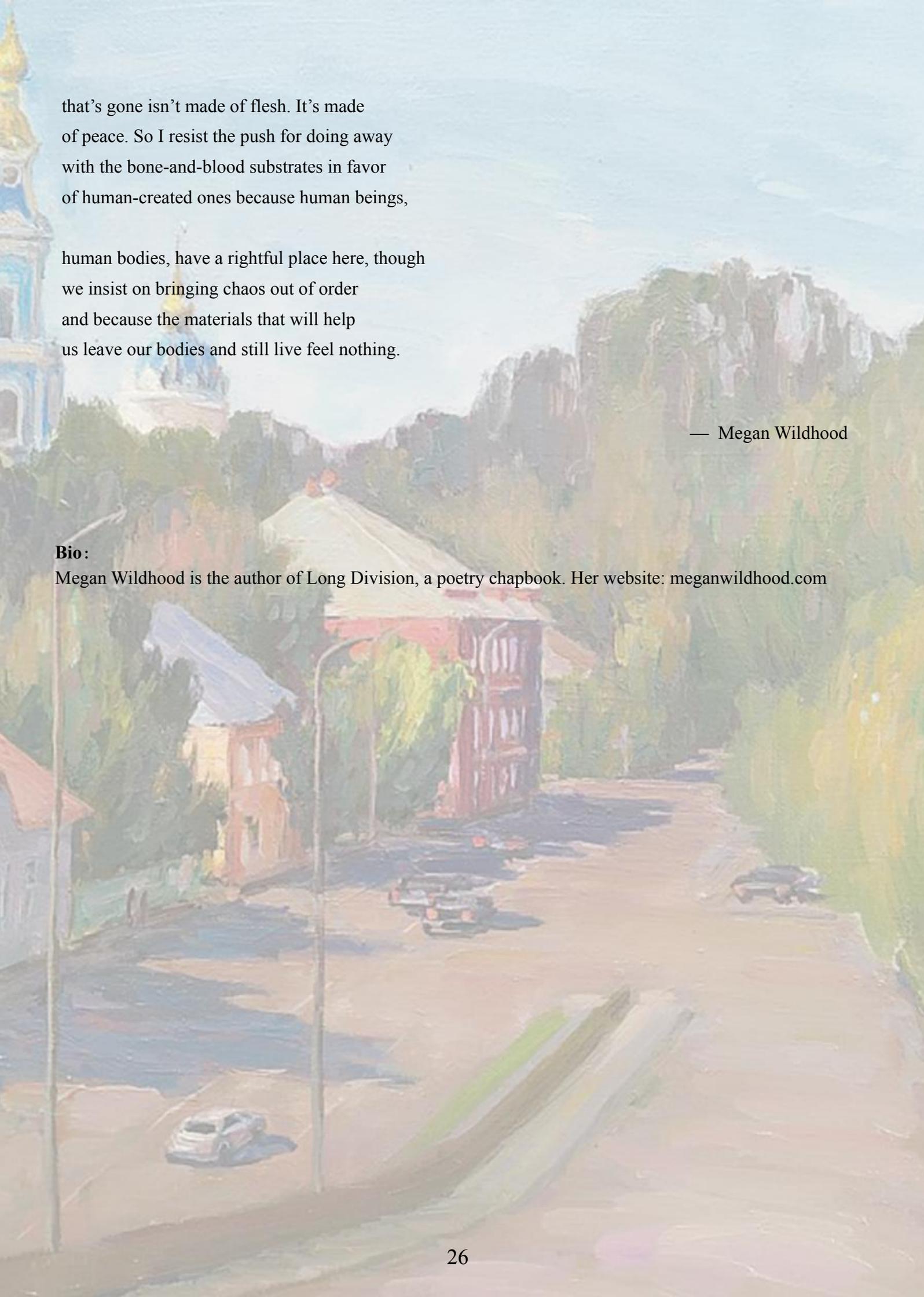
the best part was, I could hide it.

I filed my pinky toenails down until they, too, bled and then kept going until I saw the lightning I felt at the end of my body.

Now, the sheet grazes my toe and I see that same lightning from years ago.

It’s been a while since this happened.

It’s like phantom pain, only the thing

A painting of a street scene. In the foreground, a white car is parked on the left side of a dirt road. A street lamp stands in the middle ground. In the background, there is a red barn with a white roof, a church with a blue and gold dome, and mountains under a blue sky.

that's gone isn't made of flesh. It's made
of peace. So I resist the push for doing away
with the bone-and-blood substrates in favor
of human-created ones because human beings,

human bodies, have a rightful place here, though
we insist on bringing chaos out of order
and because the materials that will help
us leave our bodies and still live feel nothing.

— Megan Wildhood

Bio:

Megan Wildhood is the author of *Long Division*, a poetry chapbook. Her website: meganwildhood.com

A lost Slavic tell

Under the Spring sky a nameless man's body sways.
His soul flies to Iriy when, from the same place,
birds fly back to where the gallows stand.

They land on the wooden poles of the scaffold-
to laze in the Spring sun and sing a song of rebirth.
They will go on until Autumn comes again.

And the wind's whispers, the rope's sway,
the birds' sweet singing, the Spring Sun's early rays-
are the only eulogy for the gallows' men.

Neither devils nor Gods cradle the carcass,
Sooth its lowered brow with the divine hand.
Alone in the fields the gallows stand.

Like a scarecrow with a cloth head,
Like a sign on the road ahead,
The gallows' men sway.

Frail bodies bending to the Spring's will,
Tossed like a toy by the merciless wind,
Only their soul may find peace-

Flying to Iriy where the Winter birds sleep,
With flocks of sparrows and crows.
They don't crave neither hell nor heaven.

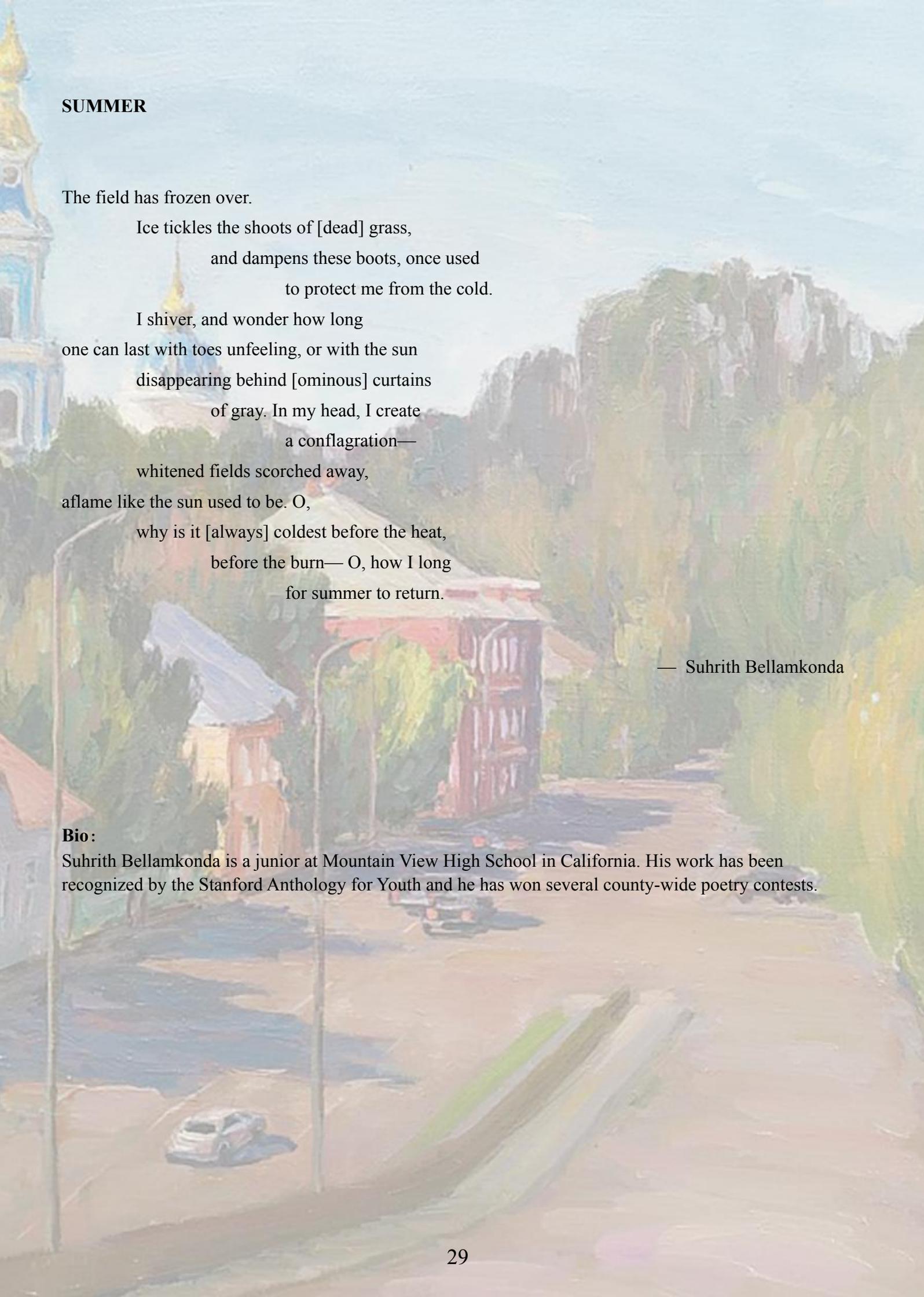
The only thought on the phantom's mind,
Is to finally rest its withered body,
To, shielded from the morning dew,
Lay its whitened head on a pond's clear surface,
And sink, sink, sink so lightly,
drown in the gaping mouth of oblivion,
That, once we die, is like mother's embrace.

Swinging the hands lifelessly, whittering like a hyacinth on a mother's grave,
The gallows' men soulless bodies sway.

— Nina Wasik

Bio:

Nina is a young Polish creator that seeks to make a name for herself in the world of Western literature. Born in Łódź, Poland, she has always wanted to become either a writer or a film director, inspired by her city's artistic background and complex history.



SUMMER

The field has frozen over.

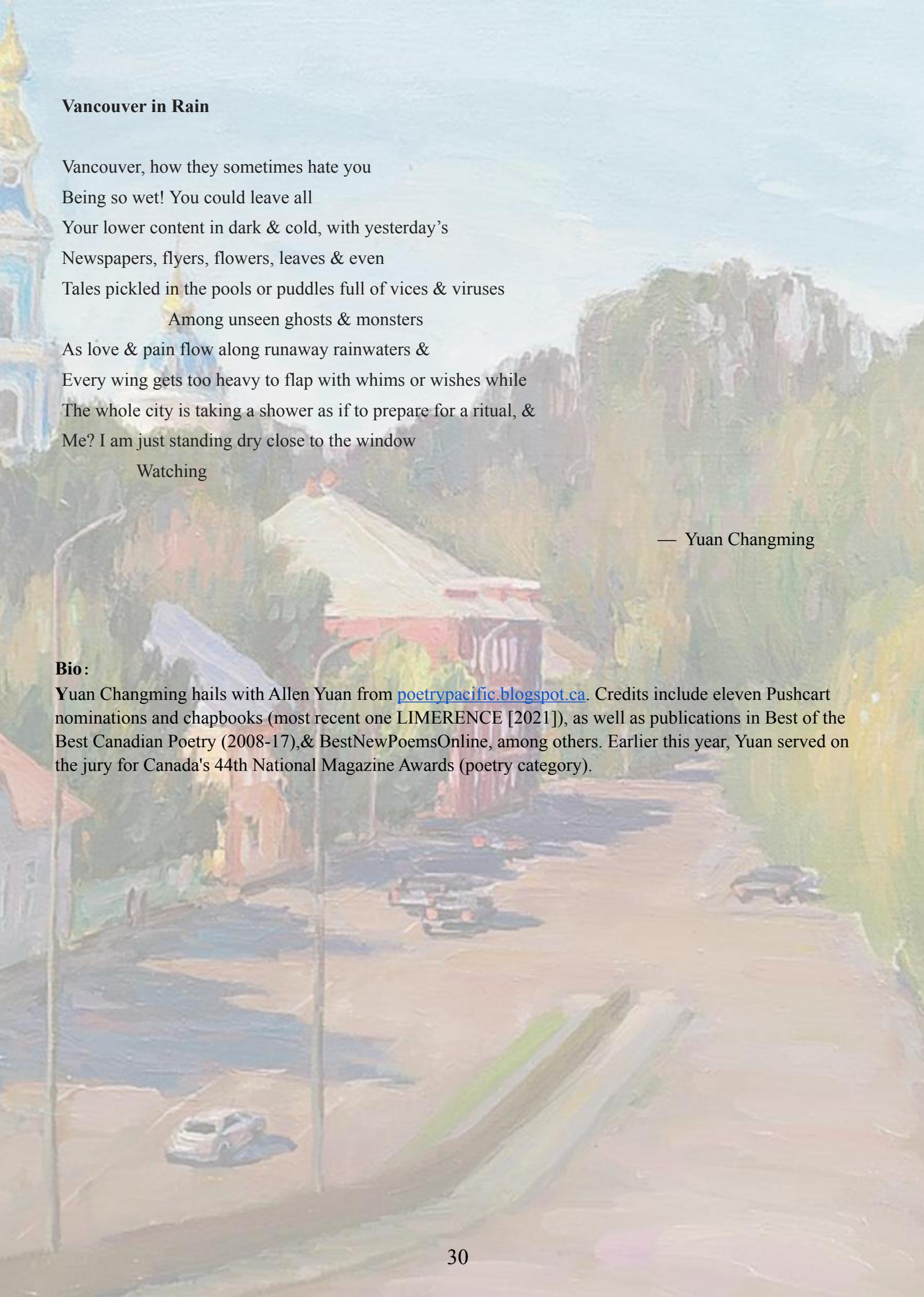
Ice tickles the shoots of [dead] grass,
and dampens these boots, once used
to protect me from the cold.

I shiver, and wonder how long
one can last with toes unfeeling, or with the sun
disappearing behind [ominous] curtains
of gray. In my head, I create
a conflagration—
whitened fields scorched away,
afame like the sun used to be. O,
why is it [always] coldest before the heat,
before the burn— O, how I long
for summer to return.

— Suhrith Bellamkonda

Bio :

Suhrith Bellamkonda is a junior at Mountain View High School in California. His work has been recognized by the Stanford Anthology for Youth and he has won several county-wide poetry contests.



Vancouver in Rain

Vancouver, how they sometimes hate you
Being so wet! You could leave all
Your lower content in dark & cold, with yesterday's
Newspapers, flyers, flowers, leaves & even
Tales pickled in the pools or puddles full of vices & viruses
 Among unseen ghosts & monsters
As love & pain flow along runaway rainwaters &
Every wing gets too heavy to flap with whims or wishes while
The whole city is taking a shower as if to prepare for a ritual, &
Me? I am just standing dry close to the window
 Watching

— Yuan Changming

Bio:

Yuan Changming hails with Allen Yuan from poetrypacific.blogspot.ca. Credits include eleven Pushcart nominations and chapbooks (most recent one LIMERENCE [2021]), as well as publications in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17), & BestNewPoemsOnline, among others. Earlier this year, Yuan served on the jury for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards (poetry category).

我想知道城市是否会成为一座有石头和水的岛屿

大概两三年前的冬天，我包裹的严严实实的挤在新华书店里只为了买到一本沈从文的《湘行散记》。那一年的成都一如既往的是无雪的，也没有风。雾霾紧紧的包裹着灰色的天空，书店的暖空调充斥着人群的臭味，空气干燥到沉闷。我的汗水在羽绒服上淌成了一个深色的圆点。逆着人流，我去文学区找《湘行散记》。在书架的后方挪了一小块空地，我一个下午匆匆读完了整本书。

如今回想起来，那大抵是少有的一段最为纯粹的读书经历。在冷冷的冬天，把沉重的头悄悄地埋进湘西澄澈的山水里。

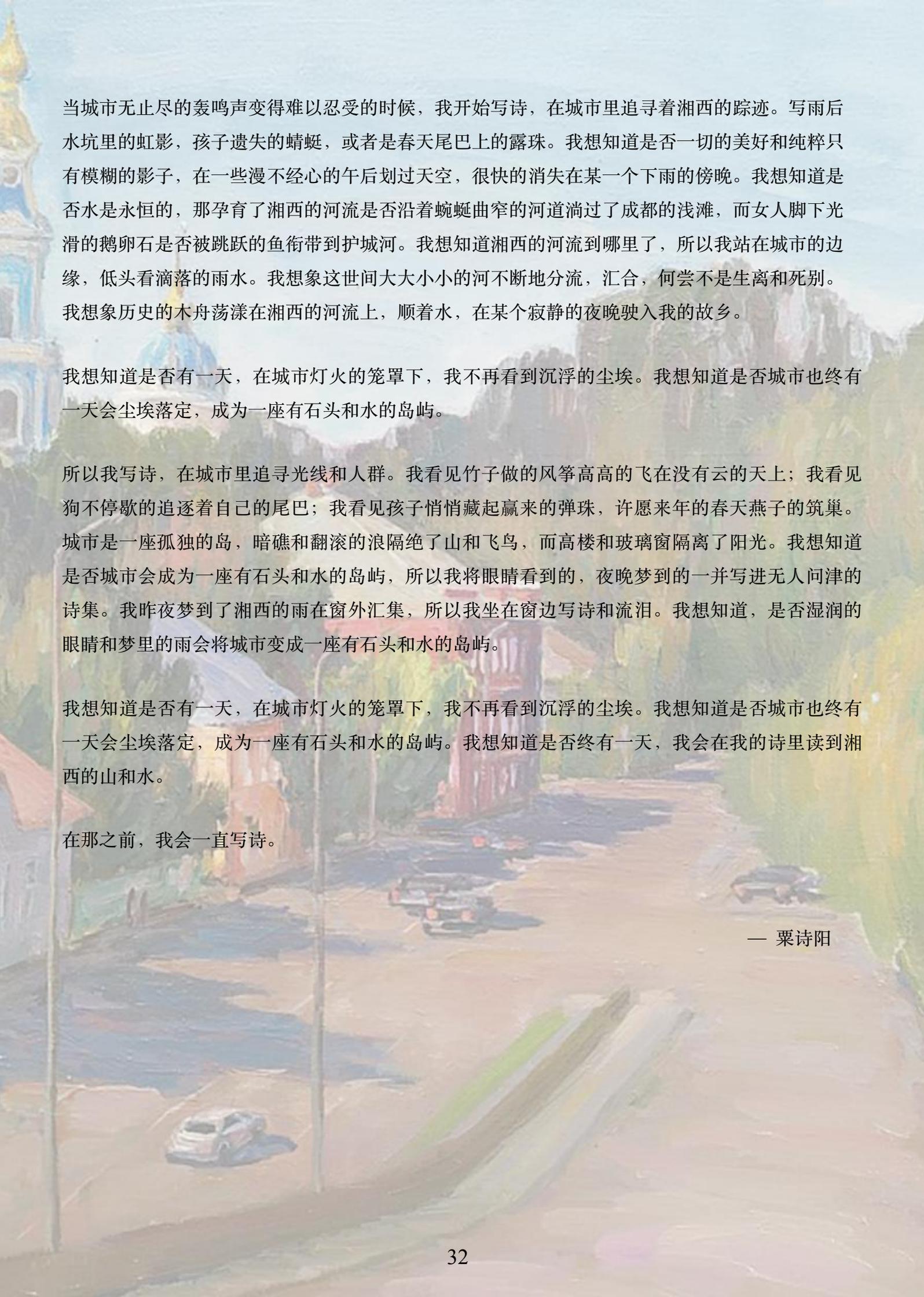
每当阅读《湘行散记》的时候，我想湘西大概是没有尘埃的。仿佛万物都倒映在明镜里，一切便是如此清晰和安好。在沈从文的笔下，纯粹的春光在山峦间缓缓地流动，女人脱掉沾着泥土的衣裙，将赤裸的双足伸入叮咚作响的小溪。在傍晚之前，她们从水里拾起最后一件衣物，抬着篮子和地平线上的太阳一起西下。甚至连性爱也透着纯粹。年轻的女人和男人在草地上仰躺着，头发纠缠在一起，像两只轻盈的小鹿。女人的胸脯起伏着，像会呼吸的山峦。男人从附近的河流中取来水，蘸在手指上，轻轻涂抹在女人的牙齿上。

他们仿佛是山和水的孩子。

我却是城市的孩子。

我的呼吸和汽车的尾气一样，灼热，模糊，毫无意义。我和人潮一起被雾霾裹挟，从汽车的窗户后观察第一朵盛开的花，和写字楼里的月亮一起等待黎明。我大抵是城市的一部分，用躯体承载着轰鸣声和纷纷扬扬的灰尘；当我在高速路上疾驰或在钢筋水泥里穿梭时，一个荒诞的猜想总是在我的脑海里挥之不去：终有一天我们会成为城市本身。

在越来越漫长的白昼里，那些炎热明亮的夏日，起伏的晚风，和不可言说的情感总是固执的滞留在身体的某一处。很长一段时间，我厌倦了城市路灯苍白的光，梧桐树婆婆的阴影，和孩子追逐的尖叫声。我又一次开始读《湘行散记》。想象着自己把身体深深的埋进湘西的泥土里，把灵魂连根拔起，让日落前的最后一阵风吹拂过额头，等待着尘埃落定。城市黄沙漫卷，是万物虚无。湘西山水澄澈，是尘埃落定。我便睡在中间的空地上，无知无觉。



当城市无止尽的轰鸣声变得难以忍受的时候，我开始写诗，在城市里追寻着湘西的踪迹。写雨后水坑里的虹影，孩子遗失的蜻蜓，或者是春天尾巴上的露珠。我想知道是否一切的美好和纯粹只有模糊的影子，在一些漫不经心的午后划过天空，很快的消失在某一个下雨的傍晚。我想知道是否水是永恒的，那孕育了湘西的河流是否沿着蜿蜒曲窄的河道淌过了成都的浅滩，而女人脚下光滑的鹅卵石是否被跳跃的鱼衔带到护城河。我想知道湘西的河流到哪里了，所以我站在城市的边缘，低头看滴落的雨水。我想象这世间大大小小的河不断地分流，汇合，何尝不是生离和死别。我想象历史的木舟荡漾在湘西的河流上，顺着水，在某个寂静的夜晚驶入我的故乡。

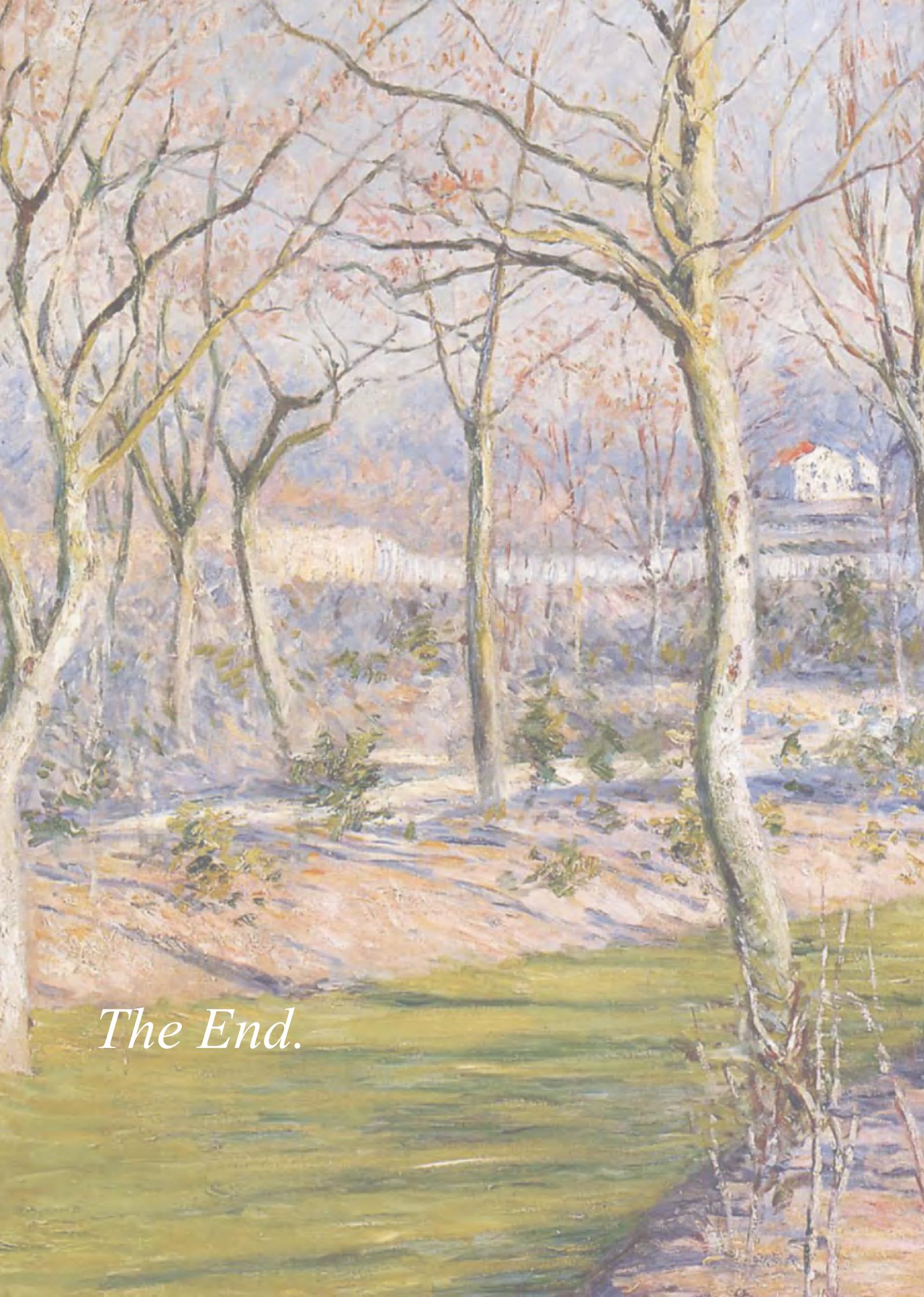
我想知道是否有一天，在城市灯火的笼罩下，我不再看到沉浮的尘埃。我想知道是否城市也终有一天会尘埃落定，成为一座有石头和水的岛屿。

所以我写诗，在城市里追寻光线和人群。我看见竹子做的风筝高高的飞在没有云的天上；我看见狗不停歇的追逐着自己的尾巴；我看见孩子悄悄藏起赢来的弹珠，许愿来年的春天燕子的筑巢。城市是一座孤独的岛，暗礁和翻滚的浪隔绝了山和飞鸟，而高楼和玻璃窗隔离了阳光。我想知道是否城市会成为一座有石头和水的岛屿，所以我将眼睛看到的，夜晚梦到的一并写进无人问津的诗集。我昨夜梦到了湘西的雨在窗外汇集，所以我坐在窗边写诗和流泪。我想知道，是否湿润的眼睛和梦里的雨会将城市变成一座有石头和水的岛屿。

我想知道是否有一天，在城市灯火的笼罩下，我不再看到沉浮的尘埃。我想知道是否城市也终有一天会尘埃落定，成为一座有石头和水的岛屿。我想知道是否终有一天，我会在我的诗里读到湘西的山和水。

在那之前，我会一直写诗。

— 粟诗阳



The End.