

Siletz River

Richard Bartow



Bear

CASCADIAN zen

bioregional
writings
on cascadia
here and now

volume one

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editors



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original mind



Klickitat – Umatilla –
Walla Walla

Grande
Ronde –
Wallowa –
Nez Perce

Hells Cyn

Salmon

Salmon

Lemhi –
Challis

Ochoco
John Day

Sawtooths

Lost Rivers

Malheur

Treasure
Valley –
6 Rivers
Ag Basin

Western Snake
River Plain

Boise –
Payette

Sun Valley –
Wood River

Eastern Snake River Plain
(Hot Spot Track)

Owyhee –
Shoshone –
Jarbidge

Snake

Bannock

Tuscarora

basket three



Big Sky

The Ridge, Part VII

These old underwater rocks that have been lived on for so long are still an island, and an island, like a planet, is a slow ship on the sea. There is no port, home or away. There is also no cargo apart from the ship, and there is no engine apart from the cargo, and there is no fuel—only the wind we never hear that is billowing ceaselessly out of the sun. Except for the children of all species, there are, as a rule, very few passengers. Nothing, in short, but the ocean, the light, and the slow-going boat with its born-on-board crew.

Momentarily, it is true, there appear to be many along for the ride. The cruise will not, however, always be as pleasant as the glossy pamphlets say. Of those who call themselves the captain, one thing is certain: all of them lie.

And by the way, there are no lifeboats.
 The crew—passengers too, if any remain—
 will go down with their planet. This is the chart,
 and that is the voyage. There is nowhere
 else to come from or to go.

And some will go down thinking nothing,
 others thinking something more. Is moral
 knowledge really knowledge? Does it stem
 from a real connection to the world?
 (What I mean by moral knowledge is:
 impractical but visceral and not
 theoretical knowledge: understanding
 in the gut that reaches all the way
 into the broken, combustible heart
 of the forest and all the way out
 to the self-immolating stars.)

It is a kind of poetry, this knowledge.
 There is nothing you can do with it—except
 what you can always do with knowledge
 and with beauty: you can cradle them
 like water in your body and your mind
 and let them hold you also, in the palm
 of all your senses. Moral knowledge is
 a fragrance that the mind sometimes gives off,
 like shore pine, Nootka rose, or sweetgrass
 in the sun. It is the transcendental
 scent of simply seeing how it is.

Could be it does, as an intelligent man
 once said, make nothing happen—or not much.
 But much has happened for the lack of it.
 Gang-rapes, inquisitions, and extinctions
 have happened and keep happening for lack

of seeing out and into how it is.
 Could also be it does make something happen,
 just like sunlight and the odor of the rose.

Going Down Singing

I

The scroll unrolling
 without end, the sound
 of everything unfolding,
 uncomposing and unspelling,
 disassembling, surrendering
 its knowing to unknowing,
 and floundering and learning
 how to swim again
 and going on its way.

That's how it seems.
 But where it comes from
 comes from finding
 where it goes.

Everything flows,
 but not all the same speed
 nor in just one direction.
 So it can seem
 there is someone to trip,
 and something to trip on
 and someplace or other
 to land when you fall,
 though in fact, overall,
 there is nothing but falling.

2

The loafing clouds,
the parachuting
rain, the sailing
flakes of summer snow,
the wingless graupel
that rappels without a rope
down the astounding
cliffs of air,
the spinning blizzard,
mist that sits
in meditation—no
beginning middle
ending—and
the walking talking
brook, the running
somersaulting river
right here diving
off the mountain, and
the dazed water waiting
for direction where it falls.

3

But you see how the earth
goes up on its toes
and down on its knees,
and water keeps falling
from water to water.
Things are what they are
and mean what they are
and some of the time
even mean what they say.

Where else would there be
for water to go?

4

Last winter's snow
mixed with yesterday's rain:
the lake of the future,
the sea of the past
pouring down
through the moment
and already gone.

Substance passes through form
as time passes through space
and space lumbers through time,
bruising and fraying.
Form passes through substance
as life does, as death does,
a breath touching down.

If all art is a dance,
as my friend likes to say—
if it is, as he says,
the dancing of meaning
from form to form—
then what is this
waterfall always around
and before and behind me?

What is love but the hunger
of meaning for form?
What is love but the hunger
of meaning for meaning?

5

So the earth slips away
like water, like time,
with all that we cannot
hang on to
and cannot let go.

Water melting and freezing
and rising and sinking,
the spider's net gleaming
all morning
in purple and gold,
and the water still falling,
still flowing, still going
down singing:
a lesson to learn.

Just singing, just going,
just falling and falling
to earth, flying low
through the gullies
it never stops carving
in space and in time.

6

Still and all, your
breath is made
of water, mind
of hunger, speech
of fire—so the old
Chandogya claims.

But not just water:
wind and water. Not
just fire but
the forest, which
you find wherever
fuel is truly
married to and
marrying the fire.

Not just hunger:
food and hunger:
hunting, reaching out
for everything that is
or ever was or might
be here. The dharma

is this falling
blade of water
twisting and exploding,
coming down and going
up and up
in nothing as it slices
through the air.

7

The voice is speech
and breathing, yes,
and yet it's no one
and it's nothing without
what there is to say.
And so we call it
rock and water.
Water takes its shape

from what it shapes
and leaves that shape
behind. It's what
the voice does, leaving
footprints in the ear,
a little moisture
on the window or the wind
and moving on.

And writing ought
to do this too,
instead of getting
caught in its own motion,
walking head down,
fully occupied
with filling its own shoes.
The use of a river,
said Thoreau,
is to not float on it.
What a waterfall isn't
is what you'd do with it.
A waterfall
is water falling:
power, water, memory,
enlightenment
and beauty falling
straight on through
and past your hands.

8

Havasu, Helmcken,
Illilouette, Kegon,
Rjoandefossen: the names

disappear in the spray.
There are no
words near a waterfall.
Just benediction:
the facts of our lives
coming down in a rush
and continuing on
with a limp and a twinge
after crashing.

All grammar and roar.
Declension and con-
jugation and stammer:
the unending sentence
of uncradled water,
one unending
breath for it all.
So philosophers go there
to be reawakened,
and used-up detectives
and double-crossed lovers
to set themselves free.

But a poem is a well,
not a waterjug:
nothing a thief
could walk off with
and nothing a yahoo
would know
how to put on display.
Not a spigot, a well:
something dug
or discovered, not
plotted and made.

We tunnel through being
 like earthworms and moles.
 Truth comes down in a torrent
 and up in a bucket
 that leaks like a sieve.

9

The way the vulture loves
 to soar, the way the forest
 loves to green up
 in the spring, the way
 the otters love
 to ride that mudslide
 to the pool,
 the way the ravens
 love to make their one-
 and two- and three-
 word speeches, and to toll
 like an organic bell,
 the water loves to fall.
 It loves to fall,
 and it goes all
 the way down singing.
 Then it cushions
 its own fall as best
 it can and then it sings
 a little more, and so
 should we when our
 time comes,
 the way it has.

Lucky Truth

I

Plato is wonderfully insistent that love is the foundation of philosophy, even though for him and for everyone else in his tradition, this insistence is belaboring the obvious. Plato speaks a language in which philosophy is called φιλοσοφία, *philo-sophia*, love of wisdom. So do we, of course—and doing so doesn't make us better philosophers. But Plato wants to think that, while misguided individuals may deliberately tell lies, words themselves—Greek words at least—would never do so.

If only, in his language, poetry had happened to be called something like ὄντοφιλία (*ontophilía*, love of what-is) or φιλογαῖα (*philogaía*, love of the earth)—something descriptive of poetry's posture. But poetry, in Greek, has a name that points to the joinery it involves and to what you might call the homesteading side of its nature. If Plato's language, in which he placed such trust, had given him a different cue, he might have thought more fruitfully and charitably about what poetry and philosophy have in common.

Plato is also wonderfully certain that music lies at the root of the moral life, and he loves the idea that it lies at the root of ontology too. It puzzles me that neither he nor Aristotle ever draws the corresponding link between music and logic. Given the overlap—plain to them both—between music and poetry, this might have solved a problem. All that was missing (or so it seems to me) is the simple admission that a musical mode or scale is a syllogistic form; that truth has a musical ring; that logical conclusion and tonic resolution are allotropes of one another, forms of the same thing.

I, at any rate, find it fruitless and unappealing to try to speak of poetry and philosophy without bringing music into the core of the discussion. These three domains seem to me to form a kind of conceptual nucleus, where the involvement of all three is what it takes to hold any two of them together. And I think that this is so for a good reason: because poetry, truth and music are names for aspects of reality as well as names for things we make and do.

A musical education is now a rare thing in the so-called civilized world, and in its absence any conceptual or practical conjunction of poetry and philosophy is apt to be transitory or cold—or else a matter of blind luck. Luck and music, let us remember, have something to do with each other too. Music, you could say, is the lucky form of truth: truth in its most fortunate, favoured condition. It may not be a universal or perpetual state of affairs, but it is a *natural* state of affairs—which we *naturally* try to emulate or replicate whenever we make music or write poetry or do philosophy.

II

T.S. Eliot turned as a young man from the study of philosophy to the practice of poetry. In those days, he had some harsh ideas about the verse-writing philosopher-poets Parmenides, Xenophanes and Empedokles. He was more tolerant of Lucretius, on the curious ground that Lucretius was less inventive. “The original form of a philosophy,” Eliot wrote, “cannot be poetic.” Then he goes further: “Without a doubt, the effort of the philosopher proper, the man who is trying to deal with ideas in themselves, and the effort of the poet, who may be trying to *realize* ideas, cannot be carried on at the same time.”¹¹ I am here to quarrel with that claim.

Poetry is a word with several related senses. Most importantly, in my view, it is a name for a characteristic or condition of reality. Poetry is the lucky form of reality, not just the lucky form of language—in the same way that music is the lucky form of truth, not just the lucky form of sound. If poetry is indeed a characteristic of reality, and if philosophy is the attempt to understand and accept reality, then poetry isn’t something philosophy needs to avoid (nor even something it can escape), and those “ideas in themselves,” which the philosopher tries to deal with, ought not to be in need of protection from poetry. If poetry is an aspect of reality, then *the realization of the poetry of reality in the poetry of language*—which is really what is meant by “the writing of poetry”—might be a truly philosophical act. It might even be an *essential* philosophical act: an act without



Frog Grid

x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam Coast Salish

Susan Point

which philosophy isn't complete, isn't itself, isn't honest and faithful to what-is.

W.H. Auden held a view not unlike Eliot's, though he put it less dogmatically. "We read Dante," Auden says, "for his poetry not for his theology because we have already met the theology elsewhere."¹²

Auden knew a lot more theology than I do, but my own experience doesn't quite jibe with his. I find that Dante's theology, like his moral philosophy, is embodied, reified and personified in a way that no canonical and prosaic theologian's or moral philosopher's is, and I think that this is important. I don't believe the thought is independent of the embodiment. Nor do I think that disembodied thought is much of a standard by which to measure thought of other kinds, nor much of a target for serious thinkers to aim for.

A moral philosophy that is not put into practice is not much of a philosophy. A theology or metaphysics that is not put into practice may not be much of a theology or metaphysics either. How would one put a theology or metaphysics into practice? Just as one would a moral philosophy: by implying it in action; that is to say, *by behaving as if it were true*.

To behave as if your theology or your metaphysics were true would usually include trying to speak as if it were true. And that, it seems to me, could lead us pretty quickly and deeply into poetry. Poetry, again, is the name of something present in reality as well as the name of a corresponding kind of linguistic and intellectual behavior. Poetry gets written, or orally composed, because mind and language are trying to answer to the poetry of the real. How are we going to speak about the real without coming to grips with its character?

Perhaps we have, to some degree, met Dante's theology elsewhere—but maybe on the other hand we have never met a theology at all until we have met it embodied in poetry, in painting, in sculpture, or in some other behavioral or corporeal form. Is there a reason to think that abstract or discursive or desensualized or disembodied thinking is necessarily more accurate, more honest, more faithful to the truth than thought of other kinds? What would that reason be?

¹¹ *The Sacred Wood*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1928), 162 (in the essay on Dante).

¹² *The Dyer's Hand* (New York: Random House, 1962), 277 (in the essay on D.H. Lawrence). There are, however, more and better things to be said about Auden's somewhat inconsistent view of poetry and thinking—and they have now been said quite handsomely in Jan Zwicky's *Auden as Philosopher: How Poets Think* (Nanaimo, BC: Institute for Coastal Research, 2012).

Solo

Some people love to climb rocks; they enjoy the exposure. Others are fascinated by summits and delight in ticking them off. For some of us, though, the rock is just part of the mountain; it is the mountain that draws us up; the exposure is something we learn to endure; and a summit is just another corner, where changing your direction is the only choice you have.

I cannot remember a time when I did not feel pulled—almost yanked—upward by mountains—but I can remember not having the skill to get pulled very far. Once, when I was young, my parents sent me to a camp in western Alberta where climbing was taught, and once I tried joining a club with a similar purpose. On both occasions I met people with skills I wanted to learn, and they kindly taught me some things. But camps are camps, and clubs are clubs, and the people who frequent such places have social agendas as well.

When people go into the mountains in groups, their identities are in part absorbed and replaced by another identity: that of the team. They often assume, and usually teach, that the group is an indispensable vehicle and a requisite form of protection, like helmet and shoes. But as part of a group you are not face to face with the mountain, nor with your life and eventual death, in the way that you are when you go out alone. And climbing for me has never been a recreation. So from early on, I turned to books for advice and started testing this advice on solo expeditions.

People say you cannot learn from books alone, and I agree. You have to bring experience to books—and you cannot always do this, especially

when you're young. Then you have to work the other way around, taking your reading out into the world to see how it fares. This is good to do with poems, novels, books on metaphysics and ethics, botanical textbooks, rock climbing manuals, and much else. You test some pages out and then go back and read some more and then go out again. If the books are any good and you are tolerably lucky, it will usually work. The reason it will work in mountaineering is straightforward: the mountains are real.

Mountaineering as I understand it is a form of meditation, and meditation is a form of mountaineering. I would not encourage anyone to go into the mountains alone if they would prefer to go in a group. I would not encourage anyone to do zazen alone, either, if they would rather sit in a group. I only wish to say that such solo journeys are possible. One can find one's own way—or get truly lost—because in both cases the mountains are real.

It is true that you can do yourself real harm by meditating without a guide, just as you can by venturing carelessly into the mountains and getting trapped by a change of weather or falling off a cliff. Close friends of mine have lost their lives in both pursuits. One who seemed to me especially alert and robust strayed into a spiritual crevasse during unguided or misguided meditation and soon committed suicide; others have frozen or fallen to their deaths. Still other friends, however, have died while eating dinner or walking down the sidewalk or waiting for a bus. There are no paths where danger does not lurk.

I do not for a moment believe one can learn what Zen is by reading a book. From *books alone*, it seems to me, one can actually learn nothing of any significance. Nor can one write a worthwhile sentence if all one knows are words. Words form groups the same as we do. Then, like humans, they start talking day and night to one another instead of addressing the facts at hand. To make any book useful, as writer or reader, one needs a little room between oneself and one's companions. In other words, one needs both a life and a death.

Teachers are also important, and I have had my share. Most, though not all, have been people I never met. Bill Reid, who taught me the grammar of Haida art and a great deal else, was a teacher I worked with in

person for years—but Reid's most important teachers had died before he was born. The tradition of Haida art, when he encountered it, was well and truly broken. Through solitary study with dead masters, he brought it well and truly back to life. Traditions, in fact, are constantly breaking and being repaired. This is part of the truth of death and rebirth. Some of us, it seems, are actually better at dealing with breaks than with continuity, so we seek the fractures out—and sometimes whack the tradition with a stick, looking for its weak spots.

My absentee teachers have included quite a number of writers and poets, and some of these writers and poets were monks. If I write their names here twice, in two different scripts, it is not to be troublesome nor to show off, but as a gesture of thanks and respect, reaching out across the crevasses of time, language and space, placing temporary anchors in the snow. Wúmén Huikāi (無門慧開), principal author of *The Gateless Gate*, is one of those teachers. Xuědòu Zhòngxiǎn (雪竇重顯), the poet of the *Blue Cliff Record*, is another. Xuědòu's first editor, Yuánwù Kèqín (圓悟克勤), is a third. Dōgen (道元), Old Man Trailhead, is a fourth. Some of these teachers lived most of their lives in monastic communities, engaging daily with other monks—but they had all known mountain monks or hermit monks who shied well away from human company. And all of them have taught me through the magic of simultaneous presence and absence, coming to visit in unbroken solitude, through their books. My local sangha also has a lot of members—rocks and trees, ravens and tree frogs, varied thrushes and black-tailed deer, the ocean, the air, the darkness, the light. One is never really alone. At the same time, one is never truly anything else.

Wild Thinking

Wilderness, the most obvious and powerful expression of wild thinking, is created and formed by the thoughtless impulses arising in nature when it is not being disturbed and shaped by our purposeful human influence.¹³ Of course, we do not usually think of wilderness as something that thinks, but readily dismiss any semblance of intelligence by describing its behavior as a process of random responses rather than a considered strategy.

Should wilderness have no strategy, such a recognition merely shifts the location of its intelligence rather than negating the semblance of it. Clearly, the planet was teeming with life before *Homo sapiens* became a discernible species some 200,000 years ago. Indeed, we arose from this wilderness, which has subsequently sustained itself remarkably well considering our inconsiderate, overbearing, and incompetent treatment of it.

The difficulty we have with understanding wilderness and the wild thinking operating it stems from our inability to escape our narrow sense of intentionality, and thereby to enter a different kind of awareness. This is explained with clarity and insight by Robert Bringhurst in “The Mind of the Wild,” a chapter in *Learning to Die: Wisdom in the Age of Climate Crisis*:

We never know the wild completely, because the wild is sufficient to itself—self-directing, self-sustaining, self-repairing, with no need for anything from us. Yet because we are a part of it—and

cannot, even in death, be disconnected from it completely—we always know a little bit about it, however tame or urbanized we are.¹⁴

Wilderness is the manifestation of its own wild thinking, and as such it functions with an intrinsic wisdom that arises spontaneously from within itself. And so, it is a direct link to the origin of ourselves. We cannot know who we are as a species, as cultures, or even as individuals without discovering our intimate connection to the wild thinking that is operating in wilderness. Indeed, this primal connection is fundamental to the deepest understanding of ourselves, for we are each a living wilderness.

The word “wilderness” comes from the Old English “wild” (*wilde*) + “deer” (*deor*), literally “the land inhabited only by wild animals”—the suffix “ness” designates it as a “state or condition.” Since we are currently only aware of wilderness in juxtaposition to civilization, its connotation has generally been pejorative, indicating a place that is uninhabited, inhospitable or uncultivated. Without the perceived benefits accruing from human intentionality, wilderness has been deemed threatening, deficient and exploitable. But this anthropocentric attitude to wilderness is changing precisely because of the rate at which we are losing it, and with it the loss of an essential part of who we are as human beings. In Marshall McLuhan’s articulation of this process, new technologies revive old “environments” as art forms with communicative powers that completely remake our experience of reality.¹⁵ Or, in the words of T.S. Eliot from “Little Gidding” in the *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploring
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.¹⁶

This “exploring” is leading us to discover that wilderness inhabits a unique position within human experience. It seems to be chaotic, impulsive, undisciplined, intuitive, dark, earthy and mysterious, possessing the attributes that we in the West call Romantic, that Greek philosophy

deemed Dionysian, and that Chinese thought labels Yin. But wilderness also seems to be Classical, Apollonian and Yang, a homeostatic condition of utmost order, a place where the internal mechanisms governing biological complexity have reached the epitome of harmonious sophistication. Within a tradition of dualistic thinking then, wilderness represents a rare dynamic of balanced opposites where a fundamental paradox in human thought is resolved. In us, therefore, wilderness exudes a feeling of peaceful wholeness and serene completeness, a unique sense of quiet, purity and perfection. It remains one of the few places where, as McLuhan playfully noted, “The hand of man has never set foot.”¹⁷ Or, as Zen would note, wilderness is ourselves when we have returned to our “original nature.”

Without human influence, all the intricate components of wilderness have somehow integrated into a harmony of perfect proportions that could seemingly last forever. In our brief experience of wilderness, change is suspended, and time stops. Those who have entered this enchanting spell of stillness may sense that they have found a place of special intelligence which is unrivalled by human invention. Indeed, for those who are willing and amenable—and are not panicked by imagined threats—this wild silence will pull them out of self and time into a condition of thoughtless openness. It is a stillness that, as the poet John Keats so cogently wrote of a Grecian urn, “dost tease us out of thought as doth eternity.”¹⁸

Wild thinking arises from this stillness, a condition that Zen assiduously cultivates by entering paradoxes and using other devices to bring all intellectual constructs to a halt. For Daoism—Zen’s roots in China—this wild thinking is induced by entering similar cognitive stalemates, such as the place between two thoughts, or the still center between polarities. The result is “no-mind.” The Japanese *mu-shin* and Chinese *wu-hsin* indicate a condition of receptivity in which a contrived consciousness returns to its empty beginning, to an open awareness before thinking was confounded by the burden of cultural thoughts, habits and conventions. This “no-mind” allows the arising of a spontaneity that resolves the tension of dualities created by the complications of a mind stuffed with clutter. Full minds have room for neither the wild stillness nor the wild thinking that pervades wilderness.

This explains why wild thinking is an integral element in the world’s spiritual traditions. To think like a Daoist is to think wild. This same release to wild thinking is the *satori* experience in Zen. The wisdom of wild thinking is also present in the *kami* spirits that permeate Shinto. Wild thinking is a crucial element in Buddhism as the freedom of non-attachment that leads to awakening and emancipation from *samsara*. In Hinduism, this wildness embraces the preserving grace of Vishnu as well as the destroying power of Shiva. In Jainism, every living thing is deemed a sacred embodiment of wild thinking. In Sufism, wild thinking is the receptive and transforming spell of living in the question. In traditional Islam, the wisdom of wild thinking would be represented by total submission to the will of Allah, while in Christianity, it would be present when relinquishing individual initiative to the guidance of “Thy will be done.”

In Christian mythology, the Creation process described in Genesis 1:1–25 unfolds like an exercise in wild thinking. The things created are imbued with their distinctive attributes and independent energies: the “swarms of living creatures” of the waters, the flying birds of the air, and the “creeping things and beasts of the earth” all materialize “according to their own kinds.” And they are empowered with the energy to “be fruitful and multiply.” The result was a wilderness and a perfection that Yahweh deemed to be “good.”

The source of anthropocentrism and the first sign of dysfunction for Western culture begins in Genesis 1:26 when Yahweh decides to “make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion...” over all the things of Creation. The objectification of Yahweh in the form of “man” creates the irresolvable separation of human and other. The spell of unity with nature is broken, and wild thinking is transformed from its creative spontaneity into the limits imposed by human will and intention. The separation of Creator from created that distinguishes Western mythology from Eastern mythology now separates humanity from nature. So an awareness of the divine in wilderness is replaced by the obsessive narcissism occupying human thought. Furthermore, the transformation of Yahweh from a formless essence into the “image” of “man” destroys the

psychological powers of the amorphous, the unknowable and the inconceivable—the “emptiness” into which the Zen mind is urged to plunge. This is the mythological moment when “man” lost the ability to enter into a harmonious relationship with nature. If the Western human psyche has long been troubled, this is the source of its alienation and discontent.

The value of a mind with its sense of original innocence—when it is in the undifferentiated wholeness of wild thinking’s spell—is evident in later biblical literature as the quest of Jesus for spiritual guidance takes him away from human culture to an emersion in wilderness for forty days and forty nights. This is the place to find the deepest insights into the essence of self, the substance of meaning, and the course of wisdom.

But spiritual traditions tend to derive from the doctrinal, whereas the wild thinking that is manifest in wilderness is based on the natural. Even Zen, with its long historical connection to Buddhism, has inflections of doctrine to color the “no-mind” (Japanese *mu-shin*) and the “no-doing” (Japanese *mu-i*) arising from it. This leaves Daoism as perhaps the clearest expression of the “no-mind” (Chinese *wu-xin*) and the “no-doing” (Chinese *wu-wei*) operating in wild thinking and wilderness.

Wu-wei or “no-doing” is a form of doing that originates in *wu-xin* or “no-mind.” Like a gestalt, it is not amenable to analysis or explanation. Imagine it as the spontaneous and intuitive responsiveness that results from being wholly in tune with any given situation at any given moment. Its inclination is to induce and maintain balance and harmony in any set of unfolding circumstances. Its parallel in nature is the tendency of ecologies to move toward a state of equilibrium in which all the components are included as active participants. One of the most prominent and comprehensive expressions of *wu-xin* and *wu-wei* in modern thought is James Lovelock’s Gaia Theory, in which the entire planet functions as a unified consciousness to maintain the optimum conditions for life. This critical process, operating without any deliberation, coordinates the incredible complexity of the planet’s biosphere.

Wild thinking—the way wilderness thinks—functions with the same unimaginable complexity of all-at-once-ness, with an integrating spontaneity that confounds ordinary linear thought. Wisdom is not imposed

externally but arises internally. Because it disregards the significance of self, it has a positive connotation if we are capable of eliminating the importance of personal willfulness and cultural intentionality. Indeed, such an acquiescence to a selfless way of thinking has been an essential component in Daoism, Zen, and perhaps all practices deemed spiritual. New levels of awareness are reached by following wild thinking beyond the conventional objectives and contrivances of our usual thinking processes.

Although wild thinking occurs in all human experience, it is more familiar in Eastern cultures where intuitive awareness has been actively encouraged by the structure of language and mythology. Without the monopoly of linear thought, which is so characteristic of Western thinking, the Chinese process information differently. Instead of moving methodically from one logical connection to the next, their cognitive processes tend to repeatedly circle an issue until they get a holistic sense of it. Then insight and action arrive with an intuitive burst. The Daoist version of this circular thinking is to accelerate the interaction of any irreconcilable dualities until all distinctions become a cognitive blur. Then the collapse of any conventional linear thinking allows insight and action to seemingly occur simultaneously and spontaneously.

This is the way wilderness thinks. A rational scrutiny of wilderness reveals that each individual part is expressing its separate impulses for the purpose of surviving and flourishing. No particular part of any wilderness is thinking holistically. But the total ecology functions as an integrated unit because all the components are interacting simultaneously. A mind immersed in wilderness becomes aware of this inherent integrity, and the effect is a succession of sublime moments in timeless stillness. The disturbing effects of incessant change are always being counteracted by the effects of incessant balancing. Should the changes induce a radical unsettling, all the parts will eventually integrate into a collective and dynamic accord of primal and profound intelligence. The material outcome of wild thinking is wilderness.

Wild thinking may be less noticed in the West than in the East because it is not a trait nourished by our culture, but beneath our induced habit of linear thinking it is operative in the impulses of how we function.

As feeling beings who think rather than as thinking beings who feel, most of our behaviour and the attitudes motivating them arise from the wild within us. Culture is merely a facade that disguises the primacy of these primal impulses.

Sometimes wild thinking seems indistinguishable from the wild unthinking that we attribute to the instinctual grunts and growls emanating from the other creatures of Creation. But our derision of the crude and brutish is being negated by the latest research in almost every branch of biology. Our survival and behavioral instincts are really little different from those of all other species: a crowd of humans functions much the same as a pack of wolves, a herd of sheep or a school of fish; our mating rituals are distinguished from our fellows only by higher levels of complexity, elaboration and subtlety. Even our thinking, when it is unbounded by the habitual patterns imposed by a culture's confining orthodoxy, not only becomes particularly creative, but can bring us closer to the character of the wild from which we have all come. Because wild thinking is far more connected to our natural and deepest selves than we usually realize, it surfaces in many unexpected places.

The insights arising from haiku, for example, work like jokes because laughter is generated by a variant of the same kind of nonlinear insight. Haiku, which commonly uses images of nature, has a structure that invites the reader to leap the empty cognitive space between two disconnected images, and thus to enter a state of wild thinking. Here, the insights occur spontaneously without the customary linear associations in an explanation. The sudden breaking of tension between the haiku's two images enables the leap of connectivity that results in a new awareness.

Like the source of laughter in jokes, this awareness is not amenable to explanation because it cannot be delineated. It is the same dynamic that occurs in moments of inspiration, that is operative in the creative process in all the arts, in gestalt, and is cultivated assiduously in Daoism and Zen. The nuances and depth of the resulting insights cannot be measured, precisely because they are not linear. Neither can they be controlled. Indeed, just as wilderness itself, they are continually changing and incessantly adapting to the arrival of new experiences.

The wild thinking in wilderness invites the same leaping of space as in haiku, in creativity, in refined spiritual traditions, and in laughter—as Suzuki Rōshi noted with his usual measure of remarkable insight, “When you can laugh at yourself, there is enlightenment.”¹⁹ All laughter, then, is inspired by a moment of wild thinking, and wild thinking is associated with a special kind of awakening. It is a process outside logical contrivance.

Entering the wild thinking in wilderness entails leaving behind the logic and will of intention. So, just as it is essential to our deepest insights, so too is it the source of our deepest fears. Wilderness is a place of awakening, but it is also the place of dying, where the protective measures of human contrivance no longer exist. Wild thinking becomes a kind of death, a state of mind that supersedes self and ego. Like wilderness, wild thinking is threatening to individuals and to cultures because it lures traditional thought beyond the conventions of control and order.

In Zen, as in Daoism, wild thinking is a kind of earthy sanity requiring a surrender of cultural habits and constraints to an ineffable something which is so fundamentally ordinary that it usually escapes notice. The practice, therefore, is more a following than a searching. It is a softening and an internal yielding that allows the spontaneity of a natural awareness to happen. The spontaneity arises of itself—as it must—just as wilderness is a consequence of its inherent wild thinking.

The resulting awareness or action is rooted in nature's wisdom rather than society's conventions. It is incompatible with all artifice, just as wilderness is anathema to civilization because it operates with a timeless logic that is entirely different from contrived customs, mores and habits. Wilderness, just as the spontaneity in Zen and Daoism, has a mind of its own that is larger than any human intention. As humans, we are a part of wild thinking, but wild thinking is rarely an acknowledged part of us. This is because wild thinking invites an awareness that requires a trust, which we are reluctant to give.

When we meet wilderness, therefore, we meet it with an ambivalence. It lures us because of some nameless promise that it offers, but it threatens us because of some unspoken fear that we dread. It seems to



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embody something more enduring and more powerful than our willfulness. For just as wild thinking resulted in our conception and birth, so too does wild thinking result in our aging and death. Whether or not we acknowledge wild thinking, it is both our beginning and our ending. This is why it deserves some attention during our lifetime.

Without the insights provided by wild thinking, we will never encounter our innermost being, and thereby complete our journey to self-actualization. Neither will we know who we are collectively. Wild thinking is the base of reality from which we have arisen as individuals, as cultures, and as a species. It predates mythology. We become ourselves in the same way that wilderness becomes itself. The primal process of our becoming is deeply rooted in wilderness, which is why we feel a profound kinship with it, and why we need to know how it thinks.

So how does wilderness think? The question evades an easy answer because wilderness is a composite of innumerable conditions rather than an actual entity. It is an amorphous concept of mind defined by an assemblage of many different plants, animals, materials and circumstances, all of which are placed outside the boundaries of culture. In a technical sense, wilderness does not think and cannot think in any conventional or purposeful sense. But the sum total of all the actions of its constituent parts creates a kind of collective consciousness that can be deemed to think. It has no plans, no objectives, and no preconceived notions of purpose. With an intrinsic rather than an extrinsic wisdom, it just is, a continual becoming unfolding with a freedom limited only by possibility. Its strategies depend on the benefits of opportunity—described by our intellectual constructs as interactions of competition and cooperation. The collective effect, however, is a kind of sophisticated intelligence and a honed maturity that has been in evolution since the very beginning of nature. Those who venture openly and receptively into wilderness discover that it is so attuned to the dynamics of itself that it exudes a sense of purity, fruition and completion, as if it were always becoming exactly what it is supposed to be. Wilderness, then, is the fullest and most authentic embodiment of something which is always being itself.

This “always being itself” may feel familiar because it has a personal equivalence in every individual’s quest to find and live an authentic life. The identity we usually live is a muddled composite of social expectations and imposed roles, not the essence of a self that grows spontaneously out of an assemblage of many different chemicals and processes. Our genetic blueprint only guides who we become, just as the flora and fauna only constitute part of an ecology. Geology, climate and water also contribute to create a wilderness of a particular character. So, too, are the internal propensities within each one of us influenced by external circumstances—indeed, our bodies are numerically composed of more foreign organisms than of human cells. So, we are each an unfolding possibility that is occurring without a known plan or purpose. The intrinsic and the extrinsic meet with unpredictable results. As such, we are each a becoming that happens by the arrival of uncontrollable moments.

And yet the process is not entirely uncontrolled. We each contain a genetic predisposition that points us in a particular direction, just as each evolving ecology possesses an inclination to mature into a particular kind of wilderness. So, too, are we each inclined to become who we are. Wild thinking is not as wild as it seems.

Thus, we sense an existential kinship with wilderness. We seek to become ourselves as it seeks to become itself. Wilderness is nature sufficiently matured as to achieve an identify that we could call “actualization.” So, to us, wilderness is a mentor and a sage. Its presence offers a sense of integrity, wholeness and completion, qualities that require a brief examination of Zen’s roots in Daoism.

In the ancient Chinese classic called the *Daodejing*, attributed to the 6th century BCE philosopher, Laozi, *dao* is easily translated as “the way”, although it can be any “path” or “route.” *Jing* is merely a book or writing of a traditional or recognized significance. But the enigmatic *de* is untranslatable, variously attempted as “power,” “virtue,” “integrity,” “identity,” or “character.” It is really an amalgamation of all these options, perhaps best summarized as the inherent quality possessed by something when it is being itself.

Although wilderness possesses the complex dimensions of this vaguely described *de*, all nature functions with the same spontaneity that moves it toward a comparable end. Left to its own devices, all nature returns to wilderness, so the distinction between wild and civilized is only determined by time, and by the absence or presence of our persistent intervention. Without our influence, nature’s inclination is to return to the original wisdom of wilderness. Because this is the way nature thinks—whether or not we are interfering—wilderness has an inherent authenticity that deserves a special veneration.

Herein lies the inner connection between wilderness and ourselves. Wilderness occurs when nature is left to be itself; wild thinking occurs when the confounded mind stops interfering with the complicating inventions of its own making and enters the still and empty place between all the apparent differences of things. Discriminations and judgments collapse. Wild thinking waits to arise spontaneously in each of us when we abandon all artifice, and wholly and unreservedly accept who we are. When we have the inner discipline to release to the “character” that wants to unfold within us, we recognize this as our “identity,” our place of “power” and “virtue.” It is what Joseph Campbell meant when he noted that, “The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.”²⁰ The effect is both liberating and enlightening—perhaps best summarized in a Zen brushpoem:

somehow becoming ... who I always was²¹

Coming home to ourselves is the existential moment when all artifice stops, and we arrive at a place of peaceful unfolding. Questions of identity cease. Doubts of purpose end. Explanations and justifications become unnecessary. Self then disappears into itself, and the now becomes the all—which is a precise description of the wild thinking in wilderness.

As each wilderness is unique, so too are we each unique; as each wilderness is free, so too are we each free. We not only sense this in our bones but hear it “in the stillness between two waves of the sea.”²² The

journey to recognize this freedom can take a moment or a lifetime. However, as T.S. Eliot wrote, such a “condition of complete simplicity” will cost “not less than everything.”²³ But the eventual result is a wild thinking so easy and comfortably natural that we seem to be living with the spontaneity of a wilderness. This is what Zen aspires toward. And this is what the Daoist sage, Zhuangzi, meant when he said:

The sound of water says what I think.²⁴

- 13 The essential form of “Wild Thinking” was written as an address for *Speak to the Wild*, a gathering at Wells Grey Provincial Park in British Columbia, from September 3rd–8th, 2013, of various philosophers, poets, naturalists, and ecologists, organized and hosted by Trevor Goward, an expert on lichen.
- 14 Robert Bringhamst and Jan Zwicky, *Learning to Die: Wisdom in the Age of Climate Crisis* (University of Regina Press, 2018), 13.
- 15 Marshall McLuhan, “Art as Anti-Environment,” from *Essays of Our Time*, ed. Bernard Webber (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 162–3.
- 16 T. S. Eliot, from Little Gidding in the Four Quartets, M. H. Abrams, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: Norton, 1962), 1970.
- 17 Marshall McLuhan. This quote has been attributed to McLuhan, but its actual source is unknown. It is, however, something he might say.
- 18 John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” *A College Survey of English Literature*, ed. Alexander Witherpoon (New York: Harcourt, 1951), 878.
- 19 David Chadwick, *Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999), 45.
- 20 Joseph Campbell, *A Joseph Campbell Companion: Reflections on the Art of Living* (The Joseph Campbell Foundation, 1991).
- 21 Ray Grigg, *Zen Brushpoems* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1991), 77.
- 22 Eliot, op. cit.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 This quote is attributed to Zhuangzi’s *Inner Chapters*.

Interview with Paul E. Nelson and Tetsuzen Jason M. Wirth

Paul E. Nelson: What is the nature of the bioregion known as Cascadia? How is this insight expressed by the people who live, work, practice, and play here? Is there a connection between Zen practice, broadly construed to include any practice of place-oriented mindfulness, and the Cascadia bioregion? If so, what is an indigenous perspective on these issues? If you ask Wedlidi Speck he might talk about *indigenous relational practice*, a term used by some indigenous people to describe a preferred way to live, work, and play in the world. It’s rooted to place and predates bioregionalism by about 4,000 years. Wedlidi is an Aboriginal therapist, a member of the ‘Namgis First Nation of Alert Bay (on Cormorant Island, British Columbia). He is hereditary head chief of the G’ixsam Clan of the Kwakwaka’wakw people, self-described as bicultural First Nations man caught in the web of contemporary times. Wedlidi is committed to helping the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community build relationships, safe communities, and cross-cultural tolerance. He’s our guest today. Tetsuzen Jason and I want to thank you, and welcome you, and we are grateful for your presence.

Tetsuzen Jason M. Wirth: Yes, we’re so grateful for your presence. Thank you for being with us.

Paul: I just wanted to say we want this event to reflect the highest and best parts of ourselves, so would there be some sort of intention setting or invocation that you would like to do that would accomplish that?

Wedlidi Speck: Thank you very much, Paul. I am glad to be sitting in a circle with you both. And I want to begin by acknowledging the traditional territory of the Pentlatch, E'iksan, and K'ómoks Peoples, recognizing the ancestors Koai'min and He'k'ten, E'iksan and K'ate'mot, and also Catloltq (Sathloot), and Sasitla. And these are the ancestors of the tribes that occupy this territory, who took their costumes off to become human many, many thousands of years ago. And with their attributes and their radiance, they created a way of being in relationship to the world around us that invites us to show off in a really special way, invites us to show off looking at us as being a part of a family and part of something that's very sacred. And so, in starting this way, and by calling in the ancestors, it really helps me to set my mind, and my heart, and my spirit in a good direction and a good way. It helps me to recognize that I'm part of something that's really great. And so, by calling our ancestors in it feels like I can begin to share in a really good way, the way that they shared.

Paul: May it be so. And you probably know better than I do but Jason and I both are on the ancestral homeland of the Duwamish and Muckleshoot, and other Coast Salish Peoples.

Wedlidi: Cool. Nice to know that.

Paul: In fact, the watershed creek in which we both live was originally known as *TUX woo' kwib* and it empties out into Lake Washington right here, about a thousand feet from where I am. We feel very fortunate and grateful to have come across this name that comes from research done about 90 or so years ago.

Wedlidi: That's great. Yes. Relationships are so important. They certainly inform us about how we are to navigate, right?

Tetsuzen: Wedlidi, we will be talking today a little bit about what in general is now called bioregionalism, and in particular Cascadia. When we talk about something like that, we are talking first and foremost about place. By place we do not mean this stuff lying about us, but rather our relationships with each other, with our non-human relatives, plants, animals, Earth, history. Can you tell us a little bit about your relationship to your own ancestral homeland? Can you describe the place from which you speak now?

Wedlidi: Yes. I think it's really beautiful. When I opened up by acknowledging the Pentlatch, E'iksan, and K'ómoks Peoples, is that my ancestry comes from all of those ancestors. And so, when I speak to you about Koai'min and He'k'ten, they came down from above and took their costumes off to become human. And when they did, they began to walk in a way, on this land, in a very gentle way. And so, in that gentle way that they walked was to know that they were a part of a very significant family. And so, I've come to learn something from following certain rituals. I took a four-year commitment to bathe in a glacial fed river, and then I did another four years because the first four didn't help. It took that long. But in that strengthening of spirit and aligning with spirit, I began to understand the significance of the river, and the healing that comes from being in relationship to it in a sacred way. But more so that what was in the river taught me about human consciousness and that the river is a symbol for that. And so, as we begin to look at all of life, and acknowledge all of life, we realize that it is about how we hold perspectives and those perspectives feed the direction that we go. This is a really beautiful thing. And so, when I think about how I am with the land, etched in the stories of the people are the orders of our creation, and there was a life before us, and we need to pay attention to that life before us. And we talk about the Creator having a dream and, in the dream, there was a beauty. And upon waking from the dream, the beauty was initiated and manifest. And so, it was believed that the first order of Creation was the creation of a family, and that's why our people say that it's Mother Earth and Father Sky, Grandfather Son, Grandmother Moon, the stars are the uncles, and

the clouds are the Aunties. And each has an attribute, each has a gift so that when they work together, they create the beauty of that dream, and it is magic.

And out of that came the second order of Creation, which was the coming of Plant Peoples. And our People say that the first plant to grow in this territory was the cedar tree and it is called The Tree of Life by our People, and it holds a special place in how we relate to it. My father taught me how to walk around the sacred cedar tree and pray. And the prayer is to recognize that the tree is giving of itself so that we may be well. And so, the reason we go through this four times is to make sure that our spirit, our intention, and our way of our being, is in alignment with the spirit of the tree. And then when we fell a tree, we ask that tree to let us take its clothing; let us take its very being; and for its spirit to become part of what we're wearing, and a part of what we're paddling in, and a part of what we're living in. So, if they become house beams, or whether it's canoe, whether it is our hats or our clothing, the essence of that tree is with us. The spirit life force of that tree is with us.

And so, when you walk in that way, it gives life and breath to something that is greater than what we know. And so, the third order of Creation was the emergence of four worlds, Heaven, air, land, and sea. And the houses that occupied those spaces were Thunderbird, Eagle, Raven, Grizzly Bear, Wolf, and Deer, and Killer Whale. All these supernatural beings occupied the spaces. And there were four rivers that allowed each of them to experience each other's' village. And in order for the myth people of our territory here to go to visit the Thunderbird, we had to borrow the masks of the salmon. And when we put those masks on, we could see the river and travel that river to be able to go above it, to visit. And so, we really pay attention to the meaning of that and the relationship to it. And then finally the chief of all the myth people in this territory was Raven, who took a costume off and to become human. And when he took the costume off, he modeled to every one of the myth people that it was time for them to move into a human existence and to build houses, to put their crest on it and begin to relate to the world in a very special way, and to always look backwards to the orders of Creation to find their medicine and their strength from it.

There is a word in our language, *tla'wa'ya'sints'guy'ulas*, and it means: "It is strength from your ancestry that travels with us." And that is a beautiful thing because it is the strength that comes from our knowing, the strength that comes from our sensing, the strength comes from our doing. And so, when we are complete in that way, we know we are walking carefully on the land. And so, when you asked that question, I had to go back to the story of our orders of Creation for me to draw my meaning and my description of that. And so, if I am opening in ceremony that way, then when I am acknowledging the territory, or acknowledging the ancestry, or acknowledging the story or the orders of Creation, then we can begin to do things in a good way. This really important way of being was also taught by a beautiful Elder. She was 86 years old, sitting with me over a cup of tea, and she taught me the word, *awitnakkula*, which means to be one with heaven, the air, the land, and the sea, and everything in it. If you aspire to be in a Zen relationship with Cascadia, it is like that. It is like you want to be in a relationship to the world around you, which means that, as the world around you changes, you are adaptive and responsive in it. And so, there is winter, there is spring, there is summer, and there is fall. Each has a calling. Each has a relationship to offer you. Each has a deepening, a wisdom, that we step into and learn from. It's a really powerful thing. So that is kind of a long way to answer your question.

Tetsuzen: That was so beautiful it brought tears to my eyes, thank you.

Paul: Likewise. In that state that you just mentioned, we're on the home ground of every living thing and everything is alive, but we're also on their home ground, we see their home ground, we're on their home ground as well as our own home ground.

Wedlidi: Yeah, exactly.

Paul: You write about relational practice [found at the end of this interview], and you say in that essay that place is, "A marshaling point to anchor perspectives and notions about the world, the universe, God, life,

death, children, harvesting food, plants, and doing ceremony.” And one such ceremony is *namatla*. Can you tell us about this?

Wedlidi: The *namatla* is to have oneness on your face. And what’s beautiful about that is that when I call in the ancestors, it is really asking them to help me open the doorway to place. Opening to that, I can keep it in my mind, my heart, my belly, and that the ways of thinking, ways of sensing, will be clear. And so *namatla* addresses the part of the experience which relates to your mind: Put oneness, put that cultural perspective, in your mind. And so *namatla* is a way of doing this.

The late Elder called James Sewid [December 31, 1913 – May 18, 1988] was a hereditary chief, and he taught me about how my great-grandfather would walk through his village, singing a song. And this song was a beautiful song, and it just says: “We give praise to the Creator and to do so, lifts us all.” And he would sing that over and over again as he went back and forth through the village. And then soon people would come out of their houses, and they would join him, and they would sing that song with him, and before you knew it, that song echoed throughout the whole village and the land. And he was singing about how to give honor to our Creation, to our Creator, to the life force, and how that brings warmth to our heart, and to our minds, and to our spirit. And when you are in that, working toward being in that alignment, the people who are with you and share your song also know that the conversation that is going to happen is about that larger perspective, that big picture relationship. And so, then they would go into his house, and they would be seated, they would be given food, and then they would talk. What I learned from that, about *namatla*, is that being one with your community is really important. Being one with a community that you can share your song, and they own that song with you, is a really powerful experience. It is a shared thing. And then to be able to know that, as we talk about things, we are placing the Creator and Creation at the center of our conversation. When we bring them together, we know that whatever we come up with will be wise, will be meaningful, and it will reflect our understanding of our greater knowledge of being one with all living things. And it is a beautiful thing.

So *namatla*, in that way, which speaks to having oneness on your face, is about saying that I am waking up that oneness in my very being. And then it connects to the oneness of your heart. And then you are taking it in and it is becoming a part of your belly. And so that conversation, and that food, nurtures and goes into the very essence, into every cell in your body. They had some pretty incredible ways of doing such things in the past.

Tetsuzen: Thank you. I reflect sometimes on the powerful and resilient canoe family ceremonies that have come back. And of course, these families would not have ancestrally recognized anything like the Canadian-US border. Certainly, on the US side, that border has become ever more brutal. And on this side of the border, border politics are extraordinarily divisive. Yet you say the song made sure the whole world was included. So how do you respond to the immense and heartbreaking violent divisiveness of our time?

Wedlidi: My sense of that, Jason, is that we are not really thinking with oneness on our face, or in our heart, or in our belly. And we have a tendency to carve our way of being into the left brain, right brain, and reptilian brain. And so, we are either working from a place that is very logical, working from a place out of survival, and those kind of ways of being in the world are really siloed and disconnected. And so, a part of this is that we need people who will emerge to sing that song in our communities, to be trustworthy, consistent, and who people can depend on because they know they don’t change depending on who they sit with. That we are really committed to Creator, we are really committed to Creation, and we are really committed to the larger idea that we are a human family. And when we sit together, we are a part of this concept, what I call *namima*, People of One Kind. And so, if we are thinking about Cascadia, we are thinking about a borderless idea that it is about relationships to air, land, sea, and people. It just requires, I think, starting with our young. It is beginning to invite our young to see the world the way it was intended to be seen and nurturing them and helping them to learn to trust themselves. And they can grow up and they can be models of this way of being.

Paul: Are there any other notions, from your tradition, that you see parallels with Zen practice? Where Zen might be a different way of saying what your people have believed in this part of the world for thousands of years?

Wedlidi: I think about the notion of right thought and right action. It's the idea that when we think about ceremony our dream, or our aspiration, is to live a world of oneness. My great-great-grandmother would sit up first thing in the morning, and she would pray to the Creator to celebrate relationship, to be in relationship, and to do so in a real humble way. And it doesn't mean like it has to be a dogmatic type of prayer. It's a way of saying that I want to be in relationship to my higher self; I want to have Heaven in my mind, in my heart, in my belly; and I want to be able to live my life throughout the day in that way. And so right thought is really important.

And then right action is equally important, and that is how do we translate that in a way that when we gather people that we're really hosting them in an honorable way; that we're recognizing like the namaste, right? The idea that people's beauty, their Creation self, has been recognized and that they're safe with us. And so, the really important tradition that we have to help with that is that we select winter as a time to come in to do our work. And winter is different than spring, summer, and fall. Spring is considered to be the time in which birth happens, new life, new buds. Summer is where there is maturity, where berries now are ripened and ready to be harvested, salmon are at the peak of their offering. And a lot of things in summer represent that maturity. In the fall it is time for us to recognize that the world is coming to an end as we know it. Leaves drop off the trees, salmon spawn and die, bears have fattened up and are going to sleep. There are lots of indicators that this changing world of ours and the nature of its transitional way is an incredible teaching tool for us, around the human spirit and self. And then, when we come to winter, it is a time between death and birth. It is that place that we call winter solstice, but it is where the masculine and the feminine dance to germinate a new life. We see the birth of that in spring. What we do is we fill it



Shaman III

Rick Bartow
Siletz River

with ceremony. We fill that time with ceremony. It is that time where this energy, this life force, comes where we can rejuvenate ourselves and we can give new experience, and new breath, and new life to who we are as a people, as a community, and as a nation. When we align ourselves to that, things work well for us. And then we go into spring, summer, and fall.

So, a part of that humility, I think, is very much found in Zen practice. It's a way of looking at life as in its delicacy, in its beauty, and its transition, right? So, when I look at that I see that as being a really powerful way of just knowing that life is very much like a kaleidoscope, and we're very much like the person who moves that kaleidoscope, and very much is a part of the experience of the whoever moves it. So, I am the architect, and I am the captain, I am the author, I am the paper, and I am the pen, and I am the story, right? And so, when we can conceptualize that then we realize that I am one with everything. I am everything.

Paul: When you were talking about the different seasons, and you were in berry season, it occurred to me across my screen in the last couple of weeks that they found that salal berries have 10 times the nutritional power of the next closest berry, the blueberry, so that's probably something that you are aware of and your people have known, and it was interesting for me to find that out.

Wedlidi: It's a beautiful berry and it was used a lot in our meals, but the interesting part is that it's such a vigorous medicine being that when you want to work with negative energy . . . Because there are energies, right? Life is energies. And so, you take the bushes part of it and you wrap red cloth in it, and you can sweep houses with that to realign the energy of the space. It's like as human beings we have a tendency to want to hold onto things. If we're not in ceremony we hold onto things, and so that energy will stick and be around, and so we can clean it out that way and we can move it, and it becomes free again. Good space.

There's a story my aunt told me about this cave that she went into, and she brought these salal bushes. And inside the cave she hit the wall of the cave and what turned up was it illuminated a painting on the wall

of the cave, and it was meaningful for her. So, when I asked her if I would see the same thing and she said to me that whatever would be illuminated is for what you needed, it's a gift for each of us, right? And I thought that was really profound.

Tetsuzen: Your comments also remind me that in Zen no one thinks of ourselves, rowing or doing things all by ourself, because to be a self is to be in relation with all other selves. So, it's really "dependent co-origination" as one of the Buddha's precious words, *pratītyasamutpāda*, is sometimes translated. Or in the present context, perhaps we could say "becoming through one's relations." And I think in another sense too everybody was, once upon a time, indigenous but some people are now far away from that, alienated from that heritage and have lost touch with it. And in your writing, you speak of the unseen world. How would you describe that to all the people who've forgotten their own indigenous roots?

Wedlidi: There is a myth of the world before our world. And it comes with just believing the stories. And the important story for us was "Born to Be the Sun." In "Born to Be the Sun," the mother married the sun and gave birth to this child, and they named it after the sun, Born to Be the Sun, meaning that someday that the child will take over for the father. And so, in this case the story describes the child learning what it needs to learn in the community, and eventually arriving at an age where he shot arrows into the sky and made a rope so he could climb up to visit his father, and which he did. And in that experience, he's able to carry the sun and through that know how to illumine the world, both with light and color, and returns to become a great chief in our world. This tells us that there's a world below and a world above, as there's a world in and there's a world out. When we build the rope, we can transcend those worlds, we can go from the literal to the symbolic. And that when we know that we have a father above, and when we really embrace that we have a thing called faith we see that there is something on the other side.

Our people say that when we die, we go home. This speaks to the idea that as myth people we took our costumes off to come here and that

when we die, we go back to the place from which we originated. And it is a really beautiful concept. So, when people are wondering about that, I invite them to think about the place in which they're standing, the place in which they are experiencing the story. And so, if they're experiencing the story in the left brain, it's going to be very limiting, it's going to be literal, it's going to be concrete, and they're going to look for a logical explanation. But if we say, "Look, I just wanted you to come over and look at our symbolic world. Put this on your face and let's begin to explore." Or we will say, "Metaphors are for shooting those arrows in the sky, making the rope, and climbing above." And the idea of putting the mask on and bringing illumination to the world, both in light and color, means: "When you return to Earth, how that brings life and breath to things."

And so, we've got other stories—Egyptian stories or Christian stories that talk about Christ going to the desert and coming back, right? It's all these places where we go to another dimension and we come back, and with that we have illumination. And so, it helps people realize that when we do the work, we will find what we need in order to bring light, love, and color to the world.

So, in the origin story, it talks about Grandfather Sun, and if we ever wanted to know what a grandfather's role is, I just say sit with the sun for a while, right? And what you find is that relationship to the sun is that we get very comfortable. We feel we can just snuggle into the warmth, and our imagination it goes free. It provides a lot of great illumination. And so, the role of a grandfather, being in relationship to grandchildren, is about cultural safety, about they can nestle into the story, you provide them with warmth and imagination, and allow them to grow that way. And so that's in opposition to stories that we see today that have no context.

Today we are regularly exposed to television where it's *Days of Our Lives* and the characters hurt each other, they manipulate each other, they shame each other, and much violence is perpetuated. If we take a look at space aliens, we create fear that someone who is outside our community is a bad person. And all these stories of the viewers journey are not about finding illumination. They are about destroying and vanquishing. And so, it's a bit about bringing awareness to what are the stories we want our

children to live. And I think those are really important. And so sometimes as teachers and as healers, and as leaders, we need to model that. We need to be able to say that "I've got some stories here for you and these are different stories than you grew up with." And so, we can help them make those shifts that they need to make and realize that now you have choice. Do you choose "Born to Be the Sun" or do you choose *Days of Our Lives*? But you have choice. So only then with choice do you become an architect of your own future. If you only think one way, we don't, right? It's like the Buddha who says, "Don't listen to me." But that's what to me, and my understanding, of all of this says. It's a bit about that now I really can think this out and this is my choice. So, my karma is in relationship to the choices I have made.

Paul: This inability to understand metaphor reminds me of a beautiful poem by a poet who died just a couple of months ago, Diane di Prima. Her poem is called "Rant" [*Revolutionary Letters #75*], and the refrain in the poem is, "The only war that matters is the war against the imagination, all other wars are subsumed in it." And I realize how prophetic that was when I think about the phrase, Black Lives Matter, which is, essentially, a very short poem. And people in this country have such difficulty understanding we're not saying only black lives matter, we're saying that this culture has shown that Black Lives don't matter, so we are asserting the opposite of that. Not only that Black Lives Matter, but that's just the baseline, that it goes from there, that black lives are what made this country, what made this country great, such incredible contributions, and we can go on and on. So, the inability to understand a phrase this simple shows you how atrophied the imagination has become. And in your writing, you have an antidote to that, that you refer to as a brain gem. Talk to us about the brain gem. It might be the imagination gem as well but tell us what you had in mind when you coined that.

Wedlidi: I think that you say that very well, thank you. And so, when I'm looking at brain gem, I look at the power of left brain, the power of logic hierarchy. And for those who don't understand that it's a part

of the neocortex, or left hemisphere, that organizes thought. It's what gives meaning and shape to things, and it's very systematic, very analytical, very logical. It's very concrete. And that's a really important thing to have. On the other side of the hemisphere is the part that oftentimes the are artistic, the symbolic, the metaphorical reside. And when they work together, we write great books, and we create great music, and we do great dance, or we do things in a really neat way.

And so, what happens is that because of colonization, because of racism and violence, we have drawn on a part of our brain, which is the first most fundamental part of our brain, called the reptilian brain. And so that brain historically was the only thing we had, and it allowed us to have sensing. And it's that whole notion of fight, flight, sex, food, reproduction, all these things. And what we did is that we navigated a world in that state and did quite well, but the diet, and they say with seafood and things like this, that a brain began to develop over the millions of years, and we developed the neocortex and then it enveloped the old brain. So, the triune brain model, which suggests that we had unlimited capacity for knowledge, wisdom, and ability.

And so, for those who are really logical, I feel that they are only part of the story. And if we can bring balance to it and we are able to know what has been called for, then we have a resource in front of us to know what is needed right now. And what is needed in the world right now is some connection to our left brain but also our right brain and so, we are doing some needed healing. So, when people are hearing things, we've got to ask from where are they hearing it. So, when we look at Black Lives Matter, and you feel that you're being left out of the equation, what does that say? It says that you are in your left brain and your left brain, and that it is a duality. It is hierarchical, and so you're responding from that place. And then what happens, if you're being left out and you feel insecure about it, is you feel threatened, and so you go to the reptilian brain and develop a strategy that oftentimes is quite violent. And you feel that you are going to disappear or that your way of life is disappearing, and so you do what you need to do to protect it.

And so those parts of the brain work together. And so, if we were able to invite people in to look at right brain, that can encompass and work

with another way of seeing this, it creates dissonance. But that requires us to practice. It requires us to move and to respond. And I find that a simple question can really help to do that, and that simple question is: Is there another way of seeing this? And so, let's invite people into a pathway of curiosity, as opposed to a pathway of judgment. If people are being judgmental, it is very closed and positional. And if you ask: What are the alternatives? What is another way of seeing this? What is being called for right now? This opens that door of curiosity, of possibility, of opportunity, and so we then become like the architects of the journey. Until then, you are stuck to a story that probably is not your story.

Tetsuzen: On this side of the colonial border, I say it is time to send the Republican Party this brain gem . . .

Paul: Because they have been channeling their inner lizard and it is time it stopped.

Wedlidi: Yes, exactly. Part of it, I think when we think about symbols, rituals, and ceremony. Like the one thing that we all strive for a crest, we all want to know where we come from. Yakantlalis was the whale that traveled the universe and the world. One day it went up on a beach and took its costume off and sent it lovingly back to the ocean. And he said, "From this day forward my name will be Tlalis, Stranded Whale, and my land will be called Tlaladi, Place of Whales. And then he built a house and he put the whale on his house. And in that very act, in his generosity, he said that "This will be me as a human being, my civilization starts here, and this will be the place of my descendants."

And so, to know where we come from, the myth world, we put the whale on the house so that we always have a connection both to our past and our present, and we know how to move forward, right? And I think when we do that it is a form of connection, but when our nationalism is based on an idea of a flag, on the idea of defense and the idea of survival as an idea, of vanquishing, an idea of violence, then it's the core of what we are. And so, if we're able to reframe that to say, "Who are we as Americans," or, "Who are we as our human beings?" And then how do we

redefine ourselves in a way that is built on us being together as a human family? It's a really different perspective.

You know what we're doing in BC right now? Our human rights commissioner, Kasari Govender, put a team together and they made billboards, which simply ask, "Am I a racist?" So, when you are looking at this and asking this question, "Am I a racist," what it does is that what would it be like if we had billboards that say, "Am I a human being? Are we a human family? Are we one people, one planet?" Can you imagine the impact of that question?

And it begins to say that at what place of our consciousness are we working from? And I think I might have told you this story about this beautiful man named Ken Bloomfield. I was sitting in a restaurant having a cup of tea one day and he said, "Hey Wedlidi, you don't know me, but I know you. Come sit with me." And then he said, "When were you born?" And I said, "I was born on January 30th." And he said, "Oh, you are an Aquarian." And I said, "Yeah." He said, "You're a water bearer." And I said, "Yeah, I know that much." And then he says, "Well, water is electricity. And you know, electricity is consciousness. Electricity is 110, 220, 440, and then the unlimited source of life force."

And he said, "Of the human beings who are in the world, several of them are 110, and there's many of them who are 220, and there's many of them who are 440, and there's many of them who are the masters, the Buddhas, the Christs, and people like that." And then he said, "I want to give you some advice. When you are working with people who are 110 and you are in your 440 place, tell them stories. That helps them to understand what you are trying to communicate because otherwise they will not understand you." And I think that teaching that day was so profound because 110 is like putting the toaster down and eating your toast. It is Don Quixote.

Paul: I'm glad the phrase dim bulb didn't come up.

Wedlidi: Yeah. And that's the part. And I think that when we are looking at answers, I find that there are stories and we need to go back to them to

help in our learnings, and really come to celebrate metaphors. And people don't realize that they already do that. When they put a flag outside every house, it is a metaphor. And so, if we could build on the metaphor and invite them into a different place. I think we already have a head start, right?

Paul: Do you think that is what Cascadia does? Tetsuzen Jason and I, inspired by Gary Snyder, Peter Berg, and many others who envisioned a different way of being in the world, one whose allegiance is to place, to this creek I was talking about, to this beautiful lake that I look at every day. So, do you think that the notion of Cascadia is a small step at beginning to do that? To begin reorienting people to place before nation and all the jingoism that you described that goes with it?

Wedlidi: Absolutely. And just so you know, what's interesting is our premier right now is talking about rail lines and relationships using Cascadia as a model. And I think that's catching, right? And I think when we look at it is that the only way that we can have impact, and influence, and a loving way is to look at how the watershed works, the relationships, and the whole thing about hydrology, right? If we spend time with global hydrology, it's just so much wisdom that comes for that. If we look at watershed management, a watershed relationship, it just makes sense. And so, Cascadia is a way of coming back to the origins of a footprint or a fingerprint that the ancestors made work and did it in a beautiful way.

And I want to speak to the notion of consciousness because when we move past 110 thinking, we begin to see the human family. And when we see the human family, we see that we were all indigenous people at one time and a lot of people are connected to that indigeneity in the way that they live. So, when I think of your work on Cascadia, I think of it that way, it is that connection to the original design philosophy.

Tetsuzen: As a fellow Aquarian, I learned today that our birthdays are four days apart. We are both water bearers. And if you look at the west coast of Turtle Island, it is in general on the dry side. Mexico is a dry part of the world. California is largely Mediterranean. Yet Cascadia abounds in

water. Our great rivers, the Salish Sea, glaciers. The areas from the Salish Sea to the far north and east have all been dramatically shaped by Cordilleran Ice Sheet. Water is everywhere. You have already mentioned water a few times. What is water to Cascadians? What is water to you?

Wedlidi: I love the concept of water. I come from water. My great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, whose name has come down from many, many generations, was Wanukw. *Wa* in our language is water. Wanukw means “People of the Water,” and they come of the water. And so, we have a lot of related names. My grandfather was named Wadzi, which means he is like a “Big River.” My brother is called Wagila. He received that name as a child, and it means “The Making of a River.” And we have names that pertain to leadership, like Wahmish, which means “Good River.”

And so, there are people whose life is about communicating water. We also have people like my late daughter, Tisitla, which means that she brings lots of light and fire to the house. And there is Tligwap, the name of a chief who is the stone in the fire that cooks the food. There is lots of cultural agility that describes the elements. People have a responsibility to make sure that they use their agility and that they’re connecting water to fire, to cooking. It’s all about relationship.

It is really fascinating. When I think about some of the stories here, in the community that I live, they talk about a time where there was fire and so the water dried up, and the people had to go a long way to get their food, but they didn’t move. They went a long way to get their food and they brought it home. Then there was a flood and there was lots of water that purified the world. And then after that there was glaciation, so we are in the fourth stage of life now. When we look at these stories, we see that they are talking about the elements as well and so it’s worth paying attention to them. Jeffrey Goodman in his book *American Genesis: The American Indian and the Origins of Modern Man* [1981] focused a lot on the Hopi and San Francisco Peaks. And his framing of things and timelines is really interesting because he talked about a period of fire, a period of water, and a period of ice. And I found it really interesting that this was really similar to the story that I have here.

Paul: It’s interesting that you talked about the flood not as a devastating event but as a purification, which is very interesting. You see people responding in a similar way to this pandemic, on what a horrible year 2020 has been because of the pandemic and how things have gone missing, but one can also see it as a purification. Not to say that that’s an easy thing but it’s interesting the language that you use, which reminds me of the very time we live in. Another thing you’re talking reminds me of is my teacher, Beaver Chief, a late Lummi Indian doctor, and I was reminded of the Cedar Tree Song that he sang and taught us, “Cedar tree clap your hands and dance with me.” And he said that settlers, and the descendants of the settlers, come to this part of the world, they think, for a job or a relationship, but in truth they’re coming here for spiritual reasons because this place is known throughout the continent as a place with very strong medicine and Indian doctoring, and that kind of thing. Is that something that you understand to be true?

Wedlidi: There has been through history a number of times that the Transformer has come, and the Transformer has done some really amazing things. And there were twenty-seven things that were done for the Kwakwaka’wakw, but according to one of my teachers, the one that taught me about *awitnakula*, she said that he came at different times; it wasn’t just once. And so, I’m just sort of learning about that right now. And so, they were periods where things were transformed and there was great change, but with it came great invention too, and insight. And so, I am also spending time with that idea. But I think if we can look at a catastrophe, it is because we are the survivors. And if we can look at things, it is because we listen, and it is because we have drawn on our wisdom to do this. Most of the stories teach us that those who survived were those who listened. And I think that is really important because the experiences and inherent wisdom of the old ways are the way of connecting.

For right now, there is the story of the Transformer who came and turned some really beautiful elders into stone. And so, it is kind of confusing because if you take it literally, you are thinking that these people were turned into stone, but when you take it symbolically, I interpret it as being a time in which the Transformer taught us how to write in rock and how

to use that as a storytelling stone, a teaching stone. And so, the ancestor, who was a really good ancestor, that story is inherent in that carved stone, the petroglyph, so it makes more sense to me. So that is when I talk about Koai'min, who was in the stone, and other people who were turned to stone. What are the attributes that we need to pay attention to? And it is really beautiful.

One of the names of the ancestor of my father's family was Old Man. And the Old Man went to the top of a mountain called Tsamas and he sang, and he prayed, and it was the time of the flood. And so, a butterfly as large as an eagle flew over, and it landed on his head. They had this communication about his future. And when that was finished, the water had started to recede, and as the water was receding, he was walking down with it, and he began to live his life according to particular values for which he would be known throughout his life: his wisdom and generosity, his kindness, and his invention. And so that is what came from the flood for us. And so, it was like the receding water made visible that grandeur, that dedication, that faith, that principled way of being in the world, and so he was a lovely man, very generous. So, when we should have a feast or a potlatch, we show the mask with the butterfly on the head, and we tell that story and we tell about what was revealed to us. And that is what we have to hang on to, and never more than any other time do we need that now.

Tetsuzen: That's beautiful. I feel fully awake from your teaching today, thank you. My last question is kind of a very open question: What advice would you give someone interested in what we are calling Cascadian Zen? And I will say this about Cascadian Zen: the name itself doesn't own the concept. It was already a very ancient concept before the Buddha was born 2,500 years ago and it also belongs to the Old Ways of the indigenous world. It is a poetic gesture, much along the ways that your stories are gestures trying to get us to open up to something that no one name can own. But if someone is interested in going to that place, going to that mind world, what advice do you have them for rooting into place and opening up one's own inner spirit world?

Wedlidi: I would say listen to the call, and that in our life we're called to do something. We hear a roaring sound in our heart, in our belly, in our ears. Go toward the direction of that. And you are going to be walking with people who will teach you about things, and sometimes they will talk to you about the river, about water, so find yourself. Look at the river, look in the river and see your reflection. Know that it teaches you that you are part of it. You will also find your reflection in the tree, and in the stone, and in the air, in the clouds, and you find yourself in all these things.

And when you look back at who you think you are in your community, in your family, you will know that that it is all an illusion and that there is something greater you must find. And so, you need to walk on the land, you need to journey the land. You need to know who has been there before you and what have they learned from their walk. And so, when we talk about Buddha, that person has walked on the land. When we talk about Christ, he has walked the land. When we look at all the different people who walked the land, we take what they have taught, and we walk with that. And how does that grow us?

And then go to a certain point where things will be confusing for us, and we hit a wall. And when we hit a wall, we must have the courage and the fortitude to take that eye and let that eye go, or that way of seeing go, for us to see the world differently. For instance, if you are afraid, you will never find courage if you don't let the eye of fear go. If you are attached to possessions, if you never let that go, you will never be free to journey to places that don't require that. And so, as you journey you are going to find in the end that you might need to let both eyes go, and that you might be able to learn how to sense more deeply. And as you do that, you learn how to sit alone. And as you sit alone, all the things that have made you who you are so far are either going to help you grow or they are going to be a hindrance. And then you start letting those things go that aren't helpful. Then what is left is you, and what is left is potential, what is left is opportunity, what is left is what is possible. And then you jump, you take the opportunity to go beyond whatever limit that you set for yourself. And if it is an eagle, a raven, or whatever it might be, soar above that and



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Watershedname

Nathan Wirth

journey this world in a way that allows you to see it in its wholeness, in its completeness. And then you have arrived at your utmost humility.

And so, if you know that to step into Cascadia, to step into teachings, is a journey, allow yourself to take that journey. Trust yourself in the journey and trust the teachers. If the teacher says that, "I've been to that river. I've jumped, I've seen things, this is my truth," well that's their truth. Trust it. It does not mean that it is your truth. So that is what I mean about giving up your eye. If you think you have to be like them, then you are going to be like them. Be truthful to your journey and when you take that journey, make it a beautiful journey. And so that is my recommendation to people: this is a journey that is really worth taking. It is an amazing journey. And it will be fearful at times, and for sure you will grieve what you are giving up at times, but I assure you that it is amazing.

It is like when I have sat alone in the wilderness. I have had to come to grips with parts of my own shame that I have carried for years because of colonization. And so, because of that, when I learn that it is not mine, I can let it go. And when you begin to do the release work that you need to do, you also need to remember that whatever memory you have is simply energy. And if it is a memory that you do not want, remove the dam energy. Let that blocked energy go with the river; let it go with the wind; let the sun take it away, however you choose to do that. But it is about being free to do that. And when you let it go, something else comes in.

It's like, for instance, a jealous person who fears loss, and tries to cling their partner. When they let go of the fear, what fills that place is love and love of self. And we always say that when you let go of something that you thought was really you, you can learn about yourself and you can learn about the experience that you are having, and a new concept of ownership emerges, an ownership of experience. And that journey of your partner, your wife, your friend, or whatever it is, it is their journey. It is not your journey. Such experiences are really wonderful.

Tetsuzen: That is beautiful. In my tradition the great Zen master Dōgen said, "When you practice Zazen, you pluck out the Buddha's eye and make it your own."

Wedlidi: Yeah, that's awesome.

Tetsuzen: You gave our book a major upgrade today.

Paul: What can I say? I mean, I am just in awe of being able to have this kind of experience. It's such a gift to be able to talk to you like this, to be able to document this in such a way, to be able to have access to this kind of material is not something that happens every day. And I'm so grateful to be able to sit here and to have you talk so deeply, and directly, to us from your very beautiful tradition. God, how beautiful life is to be able to have this kind of experience, so hugely grateful.

Tetsuzen: This was awesome. I feel deep gratitude.

Wedlidi: Yes, I'm glad too. This has been great. It is not such a lonely place after all.

Paul: No, only the ego can be lonely, right?

Wedlidi: Exactly. Yeah.

Paul: Much love my brother, we'll be in touch.

Wedlidi: Okay, take care my friends.

Interview conducted 18 December 2020

Relational Practice

The indigenous relational practice is a term used by Indigenous people to describe a preferred way to live, work and play in the world. The word Indigenous maps "the place," a marshalling point of sorts to anchor perspectives and notions about the world, the universe, god, life, death, children, harvesting food, plants and ceremony. The word relational signals 'the way' one chooses to connect to another, nature, and the unseen world. For example, my great-great-grandmother would sit up first in the morning to pray at sunrise. It was vital for her to connect to life itself. To her, prayer was a restorative act.

My great grandfather was known to model *namatla*, pronounced nah-mah-thlah. He would gather the people for a meeting by walking through the village, singing his particular song. Everyone in the village knew his song. Soon others joined. Together they sang and went back and forth in the village until all the men walked together and singing. At some point, my great grandfather turned and led them into his house. Here they sat together facing each other with feast dishes were provided to the guests. They ate. Feast songs followed.

The men were led by discussing essential matters. Everyone was encouraged to speak and share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. A check was done by raising hands to see if the issue needed more discussion.

The poignancy of this story comes from the modelling of this chief. The song described the relationship to the Creator, to Creation and what comes from believing in community. The song made sure the whole world was included. He emphasized the importance of inclusion, having the right mindset.

Some topics included salmon weirs, berry picking, rivers' health, tensions with neighboring tribes, community disputes, and resource sharing. It was important for people to be clear with their attention and intention. These leaders knew that rituals were a way to channel these tensions toward spaces that transformed them into *namatla*. They used them.

Relational practice in this example describes connection, relationship, interdependence, inclusion, and collaboration. Heaven and earth and all between are in a relationship.

The Ordinary and the Sacred

According to our oral tradition, there were two distinct ways of seeing the world. One way of seeing the world was to see it as “ordinary” and the other “sacred.” *Baxus* was the Kwak’wala word used by the Kwakwaka’wakw People to describe the ordinary. *Nawalakw* was the term used to describe the sacred. The notion of the ordinary is what we consider today as the literal, the concrete. We see it, we touch it, therefore it exists, it’s real. The sacred is a little harder for people to wrap their minds around because for the most part the sacred exists in a world that is not concrete. You cannot see it, feel it, or touch it in the literal sense. Yet, to those trained in the ways of the sacred they can feel it with their heart, they can see it with their metaphorical-mind, and they can touch it with their sensing. It is real.

Moving from one way of thinking to the other requires a transitional cognitive shift. It amounts to a form of brain gym where an elliptical experience enables all senses to work in unison to open a door of new perspective. Then, only then, does the literal drum, stone, circle, prayer, feather take on new meaning. Only in that moment of awakening does one see the whole experience; the drum is the deer, the sound of the drum becomes the heartbeat of Mother Earth, the song itself a reflection of ancestral fires and its intention connects all participants to past, present, and future.

When you walk into a room and see the chairs arranged in a circle, it is an invitation to sit together in a different way, in a way that speaks to unity, equality and in the spirit of collaboration. In a thoughtful way, reflect on this invitation and ask yourself, “How am I hosting me right now? Am I open, curious, willing to step into different space with others today?” This reflection will go a long way toward taking the first step into the sacred.

When preparing for a meeting the cultural practitioner considers the space, the people, and the purpose of the session. The host has already demonstrated sacredness by choosing to use the circle. He or she is hosting you in respect, in kindness, in love and in generosity.

The Glimmer

From darkness, the idea of self, blood, water, a soul:
my body, a brief victory over death by making breath.

Thoughts and actions, in a series of moments expressed,
a cup filled with bliss and the movement of breath.

Pulling itself into emptiness, like water between stones,
disappearing, how quickly it goes; I leave with my breath.

I return with my breath, and I understand the tides.
They are spun in currents by the exchange of breath,

for kisses branded on flesh; we claim each with each
join names to our tongues, weld our memories to breath.

In our chests, each moment dies for the next,
singing shut the spaces between each allotted breath

smelting our lives first into glitter, then into ash in this
breath-taking glimmer above death, where we make breath.

Beached Seal, Dying

It could be
I shouldn't wait with you.
When I'm dying
I might want to be alone, without distraction,
work to do unhooking and unbraiding,
loosening the seams. I'd be glad

if it were like this, though,
under open sky, near dusk,
the bow wave of the distant ferry motionless, a gull
tipped sideways for a second
in the wind.

Lupercal

At last, faint light into the evening,
buds like felted seed pearls
on the cherry tree.
More jars empty in the pantry

than are full, and one last squash
poised, dusky, on the cutting board.
The bleak magnificence of spring just out of sight,
flame rushing through life's vacant core.

May

The first clear day after weeks of cloud:
like smoke, the pollen drifting from the firs.

Moon

Moon, there you are again,
solo in the pale blue sky.
I agree it's strange,
the way I stare.
The snow on the mountains
is as white, their dark rock
as remote. I, too,
said goodbye to the earth
long ago.
 But, you see,
I touch it still.
With my hands, my feet. My eyes.

Now

You are not your own.
In you, through you,

what lives itself.
No stopping it,
no making it

go away. Everybody
feels it: the old pine
and the new pine beetle.
Nothing to fix,
nothing to do.

Just say yes.

October

A ragged strawberry in bloom,
geese overhead.
Trying again: the long work of gratitude.

Rocky Shore

Sharp sun and a big northwest wind,
the world a breathless rumpus
underneath. Gulls up,
wheeling high against the light, tide
running fast out in the strait.
Earth with its arms wide open:
uncountable its loves.
Even you. Even me.

Sunshine

The weight of it, the way it gives way
as you walk into the field.
The stillness that it loves: the slough sedge,
black heads hung like jewels,
the sleeping newt, the voiceless stone. As though
the weight that glows inside each thing
were happiness. All of us,
heaped, gold, sunken
at the bottom of the sky.

Untitled

I understand despair. History,
after all. But my griefs are simple.
No great dream or longing that I've learned
won't be fulfilled.

A thought arises from the dark earth
of the body—we don't know how.
Uncountable the days the shining seed
drifts in the wind and disappears.

View from the Ferry

Last car on the upper deck
so as we pull into dock I'm standing aft in the open air.
The ferry stalls, slow as the sun
this time of year. 3:00 p.m.,

already dusk gnaws at the edges
of the shadows. We drift
towards rush hour, eyes front.

And there—behind a tangle
of guy ropes, pilings, warning signs—
a mixed flock of fifty, maybe more, buffleheads, scoters, merganzers,
dipping, swivelling. It rides
the swell as one mind,
weightless
in the gusting light.

Winter

Feet bare on the bare boards
of the porch. No moon.
What was it you once asked me?
The dead fruit, sweet, in its glass jars.

A Season of Fury and Pestilence

In the pit of our breasts we are together,
in the heart's plantations we traverse
a summer of tigers.
—Pablo Neruda (*Furies and Sufferings*)

In the core of our being we are one,
in the heart's homestead we navigate
a season of cougars
ready to pounce from the shadows.
Scent of the blood of slain geese
on the farthest out island, nearly submarine, bleached
with guano and covered with goose feathers,
where the sea is a whip of wash and tide,
and each of us keeps a boat made of tongues of iron,
and the bones of beached whales.

You, my adversary of sleep, blankets ripped
to pieces by the moon's hunting knife, who disturb
my dreams like a wayward tuning fork
might twist the wires in a piano, who are like a series of explosions
in a garden when the caches of buried nitroglycerin are disturbed,

you my narrow-hipped enemy, whose ears and neck my cheek has
 brushed
 with sour pollen—notwithstanding the chilling quiet of the sea
 with its absence of seabirds, waters no longer broken by the fins of orcas,
 deep currents empty of salmon and herring—
 in some corner of this season we are together,
 crouched in the shadows of Douglas-fir, consumed by a loneliness
 we don't understand, waiting with dry throats, for this pestilence,
 umbra mundi, to pass. If there could be anyone who can dive through
 the rings of phosphorescence left by my paddle
 to round up the last of the remaining chinook in the bay,
 and still each leaf of the trembling aspen, it might be you.
 I also have with me the burning eyes of dragonflies,
 who speak to history's pain with Jurassic soldier mouths.

When we're at gatherings on the beach—
 Orion's Belt laid across the bed of the sky, campfire smoke,
 geese swimming, necks jerked by an invisible leash—
 you are there hunting, seeking out lies with your bottle green eyes,
 though you keep your gun hidden in the closet,
 knowing that when you squeeze the trigger,
 the silence will shatter like a champagne glass,
 and the barking wolves in the woods will flee.
 And the knives you use: the stubby one for prying open oysters,
 the Swiss army knife for slicing the red wrinkled skin
 of the orchard's winter apples, or the long one, razor thin,
 used to gut the Sockeye caught on your barbed hook, (how neatly
 the abdomen parts),
 and your sea anemone feet, with sting ray toes, looking
 for undersea caves. Can you smell the wind's betrayals?

Like an exhausted sea lion
 can you divine the turn in the tide, let it guide you
 to the shore? Can you witness thunderstorms, watch over lightning
 cauterizing wounded ground? Can you string cables up

to keep your house from plunging into the sea?
 And yet,
 more, even more,
 behind eyelids, behind closed fists,
 behind the vestments of the forest, beyond otter-stained docks, behind
 mountain ranges,
 beyond countless journeys you've made across inland seas,
 there is no distance, no boundary,
 nor boathook grappling with a drowning soul,
 your hands touch sheets, sails crack,
 your hands touch the wind
 and you are in Hecate's straits,
 making a furrow in black water's foam.

Like a mosquito tasked with a mission
 you smell out the shores of the body, the soft parts
 where the blue seas of blood become visible.
 You shut the floodgates that hold back the dawn,
 caressing the long legs of the moon as she helps you
 guide your boat into the channel between the oyster beds.

Can you smell the clams in the mud,
 hear the rubbery creak of the tree frog? They all speak to you
 in the voices of your parents. I have hidden your knives
 and buried our kisses in a midden of rain,
 but still I know the burning eyes of dragonflies.

Ah sunlight and crazy forest canopies,
 expanse in which an inlet drowns
 like a gypsy in a cul de sac,
 like all the qualities of boiling currents,
 ah materials, all the senses, warm blooded sea creatures,
 shaking with blind uncertainty,
 ah mountains with serious cheeks and noses and eyes,
 great flanks brimming with green sap,

feet of pale granite, and chessboard pieces scattered
 onto peninsulas, and rough waves flinging themselves to death
 on the rocks again and again, sated with angelic desire,
 And so, this inlet, this inlet runs between us,
 and along one bank
 I run, biting my tongue.

Am I then, truly isolated
 while the burning tide between us flows
 during the night?
 How many times have you been the one
 without a name, how
 pulverized in the shadows
 by torrential rain
 the image I hold of you
 devours the green grass of my heart?

Seasons of Metal and Water 2021/22

Autumn is the season of metal, *the decline stage*
of material: 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. dryness, the lung, colon,
 nose and skin, old age, the planet Saturn, and grief.

In September, the first of many windstorms
 hammer the shore, surf breaking along the reef,
 a single Abstract Expressionist brushstroke of white foam

October, and incoming tides mirror the gold of low
 hanging maples, Chum salmon thrash their way up rivers,
 aging fast: noses hook, jaws curve, scales turn copper.
 On their wedding anniversary, October 2cnd,
 we scattered the ashes of my parents, cremated
 twenty months apart, high up on Christmas Hill,



Star Skin

Elaine Parks

Watershedname

an almost mountain overlooking the city of Victoria
 where my mother spent her childhood. A place
 the local Chinese said had perfect Feng Shui.

First, we—children and grandchildren—
 toasted my parents with a swig of Glenfiddich,
 while the toddlers blew large bubbles from plastic rings,
 then we mixed their ashes, two to one,
 like my mother’s G & T’s, there being
 a lot more of my father. Let’s just say
 he got to be the tonic water.

Then we sprinkled the ashes from paper cups
 between 180-million-year-old glacial rocks
 in the Garry Oak savannah, dry grasses
 bending under their powdery weight. The
 ivory and yellow-stained bone shards
 marked by stress cracks from heat
 fell through to the earth, ready for a ghostly
 Shang dynasty diviner to interpret
 their stress cracks from heat,
 ink prophecies onto the bones—
 future weather,
 crop planting
 and military endeavours.

November: since metal can be used to trap water,
 it begets it, a kind of *junk an’ a po’* game
 involving successive trumping of the elements,
 so—winter—the season of bladder, ear, and bone,
 salt, blackness, deep sighing amongst Doug Firs,
 old maples, migrations of earthworms on rain dark roads,
 downpour-soaked trees forming tunnels overhead.
 I was descending into a watery abyss,
 my grief a feathered thing circling down into it,

and me falling after it like a bungy jumper
 tethered at the ankle to an ossuary of light.

Six Ways of Looking at a Raven

*A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature...
 Neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible
 in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in
 motion, motion in things.*
 —Ezra Pound

1.

I hear wings cutting silk and look up to see you,
 raven, flying across the bay Bowie knife of a beak
 long wedge-shaped tail midnight’s bootblack
 shaken out into the sun
 gleaming.

Every morning your CROAKS wake me,
 each one
 pulses in the green tide of my dream
 an illuminated letter from the bay’s
 Book of Hours.

2.

When I was a teenager Edgar Allan Poe’s raven
 – *grim, ghastly and gaunt, croaking,*
 “Nevermore!”—
 sidled into the pocket of my school tunic

where I slouched in the back of
an English class. I hated that raven.

The gap between Poe's raven and you,
my West coast beauty,
poking around for your caches of food
in the mossy peninsula
is the paradox
of the poetics
of us.

You fly toward me, feathers darker
than wet bark, uttering vowels
that fall from a waterfall
into tiny buckets
and then you
flip over briefly floating
upside down
flipping day
into an alembic sutra
of guttural night.

so the mind
*–loops to knowing**

3.

The Tla'amin, the people who lived here
in Desolation Sound understood what you had to say.
They called you *Poho*.

Glottal pops of air and cricket clicks
conveyed in heated honey 4,000 words from their language
saved thus far an incomplete lexicon of

clam gardens and
fish traps the thin edge
of a galaxy.

But you prevail, the arc of your flight
determined by compass points of rot and riot,
no mouse or fledgling safe –
the forest dotted
with the glyphs of tiny deaths.

4.

No matter how hard I try
to overcome the gap between subject and predicate
with metaphor or craziness,
I cannot.

I have no ideogram for “raven,” emboldened or wary.
Even when I'm watching you watching me
from behind a cedar tree,
there's a chasm I cannot bridge.
Even if I gifted you with some of the names that settlers called you
– *bran, kolkraben, fitheach,*
Cuervo Grande, Grand Corbeau,
烏鴉 (da wu ya)
カラス (karasu)

5.

Are my features mirrored
in your dusky feathers like yours are
in my heart?

Can a woman and a raven
be one?

Perhaps it's true what the First Peoples say,
that you are a complex reflection
of the human's own self,
which must be why I applaud
your know-it-all-ness,
your fuck-you
attitude.

Did Raven laugh when he saw the first humans
emerge from clamshells?

6.

I'd meet with Raven, if I could, in an inner chamber of a giant cedar
stump
covered in moss and reeking of warm damp like a sauna. We'd sit
together on an old couch, drink Moosehead beer and watch hockey,
laughing uproariously at the fights.
The stars would scrape at the door wanting in. We'd tell them:

"Wait until the game is over!
It won't be long.
It's a sudden death play-off."

Just an Apple

it's the mind I want, like an apple—
childish
I've followed every great friend I've known—
Spicer, Duncan, Olson, Creeley
not to own it I would write it, having
slept too long,
the ferns dream as they return
to green out of winter
the streets shine
with oil-slicks and rain I
wonder
that words wound,
splendid gifts of guilt and wit
Night-birds, someone said, are
those men and women who try to force
their way into the reality of others
like
'old Europe which endureth, parsed
by structuralists'
who don't know even the materiality

of language Pound said,
'you have to find it'
the structure—
of life which means—no longer
can philosophy find it. The
mental thing about it—

so we've gone from one thing
to another
the effort is moral—how
are you?

you can take it and
build a rock
(origin of the word unknown)

you'll wobble
unless you're the crust
of it

16 Feb 1982

for Sharon Thesen

Near Jenner

I asked the mind for a shape and shape meant nothing;
I asked the soul for help, and some help came:

some wedding-band gold
came around the edges of a sunset,
and I knew my bride could see forward, behind it;

and all the women I had known
came back from their positions
where they had been hanging the silk
laundry of heaven
upside down by the elastic;

they'd help me find her

though they looked slightly faded from being dead,
as the first wildflowers here—
radish, and the ones they call 'milkmaids'—
look faded when they appear
on the shoulders of the Pacific—

The Formation of Soils

For forty million years a warm, warm rain —

then the sea got up to try to relax.

Vulnerable volcanoes had just melted away.

He worked below, translating the author's imps and downs,
 his ups and demons—;
 pines grew skyward though the pines were not.

Thus began long episodes of quiet,

nickel laterites not ready
 for the slots.

It took periods of soft showers attacking the dream
 under the silt-covered sun,

Osiris washing his fragments,
 Leda swimming with her vagabonds.

Everyone is made essentially the same way.

Through notebooks of tight red dirt
 Franciscans walked upside down under us:

aluminum oxides, incidents of magma,

and I had to go down in the earth for something—

Iron sediments spread over the foothills where Caliban
 had his flat;

I was wearing the brown sweater when we spoke,
 my heart and the one below translating his heart out.

But by that time, what.

Experience had been sent up, at an angle.

A Hydrology of California (An eco-poetical alphabet)

There's a river of rivers in California beyond all earthquakes
 bringing coiled water from the north It is grammar when we are
 anxious
 in our days bringing tumble from freshets north of Klamath
 where
 redwoods release fog drops
 ceaselessly from filtered tops Steelhead Coho salmon the few that
 do
 to Humboldt past dams hereafter known as / where streams/ like
 colorless green ideas leap furiously/ where the Eel River flooding
 753,000
 feet per second /sees
 fewer eels than before
 Future of poetry there's a stream *between a & b* as i write this a
 dream
 of a west that would outlast us/ if we were life which we are drops
 from Trinity ice storms to Smith River & down North Coast regions
 brighter seaside towns with
 two waitresses named Pam
 Future of poetry i saw a black-faced gull a juvenile awaiting neap
 tide
 We use the word *neap* to mean purple runnels/ Banks gathered wild
 force



Self

Watershedname

Nathan Wirth

at the edge of names Mattole Navarro /Hearts gathered wild force
 electrons
 trading energy for food
 Future of poetry Let's move between emotions in hydro-poetics for
 i am a pilgrim with no progress recalling rivers when we were
 anxious
 past wetlands needing every turning time/ more than people need
 little dams for arugula
 Many had lawns They had to shower/ They had to eat i said to main
 brenda
 Now don't start just ignorantly criticizing state dams the whole
 time
 You drink gallons of it you know you do / We followed creeks through
 decades
 left of where eagles
 can eat whole deer
 Stopped near Fort Ross We looked up to redwoods releasing beads
 fog
 drops The women so kind in Mendocino They took the beyond &
 ran
 with it You wrote on the memory tablets/ Blind sticks arranged
 themselves
 Water-bearer was your star
 Our settlements didn't last
 nor should they have nor should they There were economics &
 lifestyles
 after explorers made possible the cogs/ .00001 percent in rain fell
 down /We stood & loved south/ of the delicate eerie lighthouse at
 Point Arena where griefless
 the sea lions loll

On Hearing the Golden Crowned Sparrow

` `` , Half-sweet squeal, with a curve
(<https://www.bird-sounds.net/golden-crowned-sparrow/>)

like a hearing aid placed on the table.

A song knows
more than one way.

My love wakes in a good mood most days...

When the hills catch fire,
this sparrow stays
(or, returns
to the same bush each year—)

We loved each other
when we couldn't love ourselves;

our life is a time-shaped miracle.

A fine ash is covering the plants,

planet... plans::

this bird's enchantment has a grainy hunger,

finishingly, seep-seep, nightly
finishing unearhbound, like a Saturday.

Broad eyebrows crowd its crown.

When we are sad about poetry,

when the immortals can't
be heard because of fire

this staggered sound. Split
splendor (about

our height, from the ground)

Interview with George Stanley by Barry McKinnon

Barry McKinnon: I was thinking this morning that there is a point where a young person becomes a writer or calls himself a poet. Do you remember when that happened with you?

George Stanley: I can remember when I started writing poetry, but I cannot remember when I started calling myself a poet. I'm not really sure if I call myself a poet now, but to go back to that—sixteen years old I had an English teacher who required everyone in the class—this is third year high school—to write poetry, and his name was in [the serial poem] “San Francisco’s Gone,” Edward Dermott ‘Ned’ Doyle.

Barry McKinnon: Yes, and “for Gerald, much love . . .”

George Stanley: That’s my brother.

Barry McKinnon: The complete dedication reads, and the memory of Edward Dermott ‘Ned’ Doyle who taught me poetry and gave me reason to travel north of California Street.”

George Stanley: California Street when I was growing up was the farthest north in the city that anyone in our family would have any reason to go.

Barry McKinnon: Was it like a boundary line?

George Stanley: It was kind of like the experience of a boundary line. It runs over Nob Hill and it isn’t higher ground all the way through the city—it was a cable car line that ran at one point all the way from Market Street to Presidio Avenue, which is about two thirds the way across the city and on California Street, or just south of it where doctors’ offices, big hospitals—and that was one reason you might want to go to California Street was to visit a doctor, but no other reason, and I think this probably has to do with ethnic background; that is, my family is Irish and north of California Street would be either rich people of English descent or it was Chinatown and North Beach, so going north of California Street—Doyle as I said, gave me reasons, two reasons: one was that when I eventually came back from the army in 1956, I went up to North Beach, which is north of California Street and that’s where the poets were. And the other was that Doyle was gay, so that appealed to me too—anything that was oppositional or contrary to accepted morality was also happening in North Beach. So that’s what I really meant, but to get back to writing poetry when I was 16—and all wrote poetry and he told three of us later on that we had some talent for writing poetry. Now one of the three was my friend Manuel Teles and the other was a boy named John Tsimisand. Manuel was writing John Tsimisand’s poems for him for money (laughter), so we can leave John out of it. But Manuel and I had some talent. I lost track of Manuel many many years ago. I don’t know if he’s still writing poetry.

Barry McKinnon: So literally, your first writing came out of an assignment in high school?

George Stanley: Came out of an assignment, in literature, in English class. So then I wrote poetry that year and then I stopped and then I wrote some poems again when I was at university in Salt Lake City and again stopped and then I wrote some poems as a matter of fact. Now that’s not quite right because in between high school and going to Salt Lake City, I was one year at the University of San Francisco and I know I wrote there

because I think they were published in the University of San Francisco literary magazine, and then at Salt Lake City, I was at the University of Utah, and it's interesting that—this is before North Beach—this is 1952, so it's before the beatnik era began and so going to Salt Lake City, which is one of the most repressive cities in America, from San Francisco, which is one of the most liberal—that when I got to Salt Lake City, I found myself in the counterculture for the first time because anyone who was not a Mormon was in the counterculture. So, the counterculture consisted of Catholics and Anglicans as well as gays and lesbians and communists and poets—anyone who was not part of the Mormon establishment—so there I met all these bohemians, that's the general term “bohemian types,” but isn't that paradoxical?! I met them not in New York or San Francisco where I was born but in Salt Lake City. So, there I published some poems and a literary mag we started at the University of Utah, which was called *Context*, and then I stopped writing again. I went into the army and when I was in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, living on separate rations in sort of like an auto court by the river, working as an assistant poultry inspector—I was very lonely. I started writing poetry again there. But each of those three times I stopped . . . but then again I didn't stop because I was always writing some, and then I came back to San Francisco after I was out of the army and I went to the University of California, Berkeley, and I had an old friend named Gary MacKenzie from Salt Lake City and he was living in San Francisco at the time, so we got together and went out to a bar—Vesuvio Bar—this is 1956, late '56, in North Beach and while we were in there we met another man whose name I forget. I think it was Stanley McNail—I don't quite have that name—and he said to us, “Do you want to go to a real bohemian bar?” So, we went with him up Grant Avenue to a place called The Place, and it was either that night or the next night or the next week, when I was back again, that I met Jack Spicer there. I remember having my first conversation with Spicer; it was about Emerson and Thoreau, and I met Joe Dunn there along with Spicer and Knute Stiles and a couple of other people, and at some point, I had shown a poem to someone, and I think I went over to Joe Dunn's house on Bay Street. Spicer was there—and he liked the poem I showed him, which was

“Pablito [at the Corrida],” the first poem in *Flowers* [White Rabbit Press, 1965], and I remember walking back down to Spicer's house or towards where he lived down Polk Street in the middle of the night and him telling me I should join his workshop in poetry, and I eventually did that, and I had dropped out of university and spent the next eleven years of my life in North Beach, except for a year in Greenwich Village, which was the same place, writing poetry. So that's how it all started.

Barry McKinnon: Ned Doyle did something to your curiosity in terms of going past California Street.

George Stanley: Well, to go north of California Street meant to break away from my family.

Barry McKinnon: And once you do that, of course, at that age, most young writers have to find the teachers or connections.

George Stanley: Yes, so I found the teacher—Spicer.

Barry McKinnon: I remember reading that he had a pretty odd and sophisticated test before a student could take his poetry workshop.

George Stanley: Yeah, he did, and I don't remember much about it; it's all in some of that Spicer material. It was a test made up of questions about literature, history, and philosophy, and I met him later after the workshop had started. I got into the workshop without taking the test, but later on, I saw a copy of the test, and—I was very much of a—shall I say, an academic kind of intellectual kid, and I would have answered the test quite straightforwardly and to display my . . .

Barry McKinnon: Erudition?

George Stanley: My erudition, yeah, and if that happened, then I would not have gotten into the workshop because the test was to screen out

people who could pass it (laughter) or who would take it seriously or if you were so . . .

Barry McKinnon: I think poets *always* have to fail the test! (laugh)

George Stanley: Or if you were someone like Ebbe Borregaard, then you would just crumple the whole thing up into a wad of paper, and say, "I'm not going to do any of this bullshit!" And then you would get into the workshop.

Barry McKinnon: The test is the test! What were your first feelings about Spicer?

George Stanley: I admired him immensely and got drawn in by Spicer into these wars that he would have with Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser, where I was always on the wrong side, the losing side.

Barry McKinnon: Was there some kind of test of loyalties that had a dimension in poetic thinking? Fights over theoretical matters?

George Stanley: Well, yes, they were fights over . . . I can't remember. I mean one time, I know that Spicer was accusing Duncan of having sold out to New York, and another time he was accusing him of having too many Egyptian gods in his poems, and these things were very very serious to Spicer. Robin would tend to feel aggrieved, and Duncan would simply dismiss the whole thing and joke about it, but for Spicer, these were deadly serious issues. Spicer wrote about the human crisis in one of his poems. I mean, Spicer really did see what was happening to our species.

Barry McKinnon: You see amazing risks in his lines, a kind of seriousness—his life was on that line.

George Stanley: Yes, with every poem. Once we had a poetry meeting and he read some poems, and I think it was Joanne Kyger who said, "Well, Jack, those are pretty good poems, typical Jack Spicer poems," and he immediately wadded the whole thing up and threw it—no, it wasn't Joanne who said that, I think it was Duncan—and Jack just wadded the whole thing up and threw it in the wastebasket, and Joanne went to grab them out of the waste basket and said, "Jack these are beautiful poems, don't throw them away!" But Jack would do that. The least hint that he was doing anything that would be immoral—of course he hated the whole concept of morals, so that wouldn't be the word he would use—something "whorish," that was a word he would use, anything that was "whorish," that was in some way selling out to the English Department of the Soul or to New York, he would say, "Alright that's it, destroy that."

Barry McKinnon: So, he was tapped into some notion of the purity of the act of writing poetry?

George Stanley: Yeah, and he came to believe that these were forces outside the poem, outside our universe, perhaps, that were giving him poems. It's important that he did not identify those with language.

Barry McKinnon: No, his source, he might say, was the radio, or the Martians.

George Stanley: And various people such as Creeley has something about the poem coming from language—I believe Creeley said that at one point and Spicer rejected that. The language is just the furniture in the room. But this is all on record in some interview that Spicer did—the Vancouver lectures.

Barry McKinnon: I think Creeley would claim that he is responsible for writing the poem—he generates the language. However, if you're going to talk about the ego, superego, or the unconscious as a source of poetry, then you might just as well talk about Martians.

George Stanley: The source is outside. That's what Blaser titled that essay: "The Practice of Outside." Spicer's word was that it always comes from outside.

Barry McKinnon: Did you connect with these ideas and teachings in terms of your own writing?

George Stanley: I was influenced by Spicer's poetry, by Creeley, and I was influenced by Zukofsky, and all of these, I think, were not particularly good influences on me; they sort of narrowed my poetry down, made it more tight, but then again I was—Spicer noticed this when I wrote *Pony Express Riders* [White Rabbit Press, 1963], he said, "Well, you're finding out—like when I wrote *Flowers*, that was just juvenilia, unexamined, un-disciplined exploitation of feeling and lyricism and pain and emotion, and then when I started trying to create a poem out of language in poems like "Pony Express Riders," I was influenced by people who were doing very small poems like Creeley, and poems of Creeley wit, and Spicer's poems and Zukofsky's—but I don't think these were particularly good influences on me. The influence that I picked up at that time that really did, that was crucial for me, was Charles Olson—the use of history in the poem.

Barry McKinnon: I can see all of these influences in your work. This morning reading poems "after Creeley" shows that you mastered that short line and then of course in the new work, "San Francisco's Gone," I can see history—personal family history.

George Stanley: Well, the biggest influence on my poetry all the way back is T. S. Eliot. T. S. Eliot of "Prufrock" and "The Wasteland."

Barry McKinnon: That's interesting, because T. S. Eliot was not well accepted in certain circles of modern American poetics.

George Stanley: That's right, yeah. It was that ironic stance in Eliot's poems that I find deeply influenced my poems for good or for bad. I got this

sense that you could use history in a poem from Olson. I also got that at the same time from Robert Lowell—his book *Life Studies*. And those three, Eliot, Olson, Lowell, seemed to be the people who affected me the most and they all go back to Boston.

Barry McKinnon: Absolutely. Eliot's large brick family summer home in Gloucester, and Lowell, of course, lived in Boston, and I think they were all connected with Harvard.

George Stanley: I don't think Olsen was, but it's just such a coincidence that all of those three influences, in a way, go back to Boston. My father's father's father may have come from Boston. So may have my father's mother's father come through Boston from Ireland, but I sensed that there is some connection back there with Boston or with New York.

Barry McKinnon: It's funny you mention Eliot because he's the first poet I heard on CBC, a recording of him reading, when I was 15 years old and starting to write. I was dumbfounded. I didn't understand the poem, but I heard the music and I guess—he was reading an iambic line of sorts. His rhythm carried that tone of great seriousness and drama and I loved it. Anything else on the radio in those days in Calgary would have been country and western music.

George Stanley: It's that kind of ironic detachment that I picked up that "I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be."

Barry McKinnon: Well, I find that in your work, but at the same time I find what I call self—your ability to see yourself, but with detachment.

George Stanley: Yeah, well that's the character of my poetry—that it is all about self and it's also the limitation of it. And when I feel good about what I say—well, after all Montaigne wrote about nothing but himself but somehow, I don't feel that that's a reflection of good faith. And what I'm most happy about my poetry is when it gets out of self and it seems to

me that so rarely does it get out of self—it does in the last part of a couple of new poems, the “Berlin Wall,” and a poem called “For Prince George.”

Barry McKinnon: “Pony Express Riders,” an earlier poem, has a “subject”—it’s outside of the self.

George Stanley: That’s true—that poem is totally outside of the self.

Barry McKinnon: It might be kind of an unusual poem in terms of your collected works, I would think. I see much of your work characterized in lines like: “My heart is broken permanently / it works better that way.” When I see that kind of surprise in a poem, it sends shivers up my spine. You could have written, “My heart is broken”—a cliché—but you add, “broken permanently.” But then there’s that ironic detachment and surprise: “it works better that way.” The negative becomes a positive that contains a kind of energy of faith, and I think your best poems do that, even when you might feel you have no faith . . .

George Stanley: Well, I think you have to. That’s what we were talking about last night; they need to have faith starting with that line you had quoted from Coleridge, “the willing suspension of disbelief.” And Spicer in one of his poems a “willing suspension of disbelief” has as much chance as a snowball in hell (laughter). I think that little poem, your heart is broken . . . I don’t know to what extent we think of our poetry as lasting if you want some of your poems to last—but with the very best poets, not much of it lasts. It’s not a question of it lasting after you’re dead. It’s a question of it having the character of a poem that you could imagine lasting, and very very little of my poetry, or I think from probably putting yourself in the consciousness of any poet, he or she would probably say, well, very little of my poetry has that character, but the fact that some of it does, a little bit of it does—there is something absolutely crucial, absolutely wonderful about that, unquestionable about that.

Barry McKinnon: I agree. Poetry is a gift, and once it’s out there, it’s hard to say what will last. The irony is that what might last is the thing you wouldn’t expect would last.

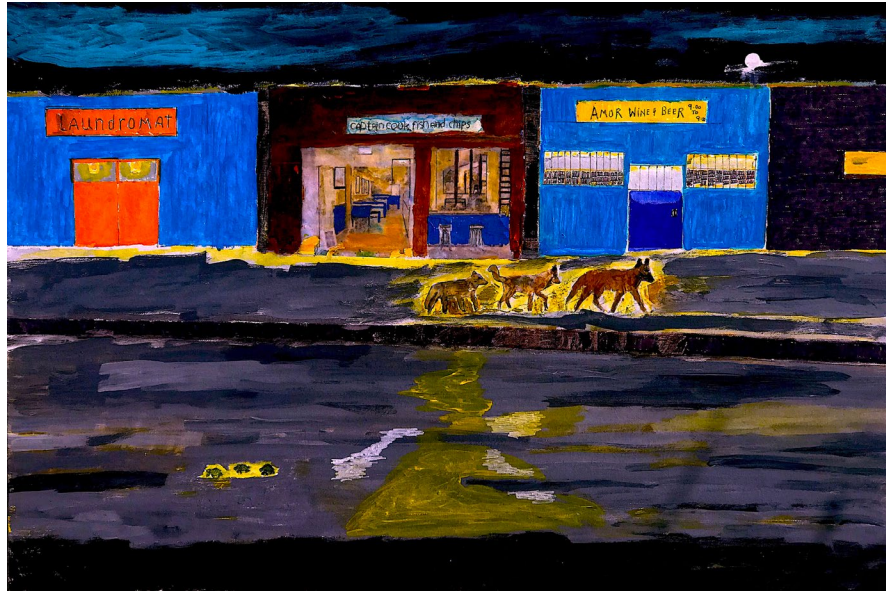
George Stanley: (laughter) Gelett Burgess’s “The Purple Cow.”

Barry McKinnon: Yeah, something like that. You have many lines that stick with me, lines like “going to the store / for a pack of cigarettes, going to Prince George.”

George Stanley: The first poem in [the serial poem] “Mountains & Air”: “Light up the world with your faith.”

Barry McKinnon: I see those specific details that I really like in your poems, but you also manage to get lines that have meanings that are very important meanings that lift out of all those details.

George Stanley: Well, that poem I really like. “Mountains & Air” is now 10 or 12 years back, and that seems to me like we were talking about our greatest hits—that’s one of my greatest hits. I go back and I still like that poem. I like the way it is just filled with all kinds of random stuff like Julia Child, or that pack of cigarettes, or the pictures of the graduating class of Prince Rupert Senior Secondary hanging on the wall, or the other pack of cigarettes that the pilot holds up and says, “Okay, smoke.” It is so filled with that random stuff that it is in a way like the world untouched by the so-called creative mind. So, the great stuff in those poems just comes out unexpectedly, without any rhetorical preparation, and it goes away just as quickly, and the whole poem at the end seems to have been almost a kind of a natural event rather than a contrived structure.



Wolves on the Way Home

Mountains & Air (first ten sections)

I. LIGHT UP THE WORLD WITH YOUR FAITH

To build up a world out of strange books
 in the absence of faith. Going to the store
 for a pack of cigarettes, going to Prince George,
 going to sleep, exactly the same

trip. The hardest step on every journey
 is the last, and every step is the last,
 downwind from the engine. Yet
 every one of us expecting

(as in a cornfield) realization,
 the answer ripening to the question.
 To have them both, the breath of hope

in air. After harvest it is impossible
 even to lift your feet. The police
 shouts in the night, shouts in the brain
 the voice,

tiny but confident, as each grain
 is eaten. Answer to answer to answer,
 lined up. There is nothing to do with this
 but put up with it, live with it. Paper
 your walls with it.

2. 27/10/76

Where to get back to the truth
I don't have the truth in my hands

any more. These little stories
don't even need the language,

they use the peril language.
Deep in the middle of everything.
Germany. Your picture of the Saskatchewan
Wheat Pool.

3

The mist rises
off the river.
The bears come down
to eat the garbage

back of Dog'n'Suds.
Stand up in the road
like little boys
in bear suits.

This is Big Rock, this is
Carwash Rock,
early in the season

4. LAKELSE AVENUE

No look back
when you
get out to the edge you see
nothing.

I was born into a world
of appearances, sub-
stantialities, soft
colours, sharp noises,
clouds closing. It
had a rattle.

Nothing has no name
you

fight to get back
to the familiar
turns
of phrase, the triang-
ulations of recognition,
the quantum jump

into the next block
under street lights
ask for a cigarette,

the town shimmers,
trembles.

Feed this
grinning transparency.

5. TELL THE TRUTH

Learning to live alone, learning alone
Why? Because there is no other
person yet? No, there may be.
But all seem alike to me, other
than me, not other to me.

To make me up, that was the way
then. Now made up, trimmed
of useless branches,
 foliage hanging
over the road, a good self
but off the road, a limbless
self, good wood, no knots
in me, a pole.

Learning to live alone, learning alone
to live? In Terrace?

I don't know why I'm here unless it is
to be here. To be *here*.

Oh yes the job that I deserved
like a poker player with a run of bad
luck deserves a flush, & BC Med
is my hole card, which I find contemptible.

My dreams make no sense to me,
 they seem to be
about things I have never heard of
My daydreams too. Someone else
I seem to be, not the old familiar me,

& I'd gladly believe life was a cabaret
or a carnival, or a ship, except that it isn't
This mere state of being is vast

6

Glaciers in the arms of trees.
It is a topography, it is
a vast shadow.

Drove up the logging road
3 miles before I realized
it wasn't going anywhere.

Hummingbirds at feeders.
Gitxsan boy, hitchhiking. Bus
trudging through the slush, near Kwinita.

Ravens.

From all points
they fly
 to one
heart of being.

7

Big fish on the line,
Kispiox River.
Impossible that this
ever be other.

Too many wooden bridges.
Go slow,
take your foot
off the gas.

Each individual
bear, fanged,
each individual
plane.

8

What am I forgetting?

The fear

that grows from the centre
of a person's being. The fear
of death, the fear of woman

transmuted in the clouds
into a fear of flying,
the engines failing,
the wind's fingers. And yet

the bird escapes the wing's fingers,
soars upward, falls

is caught
by law

by uprushing air

9. FEWER

cigarettes (marijuana), more
cigarettes (nicotine), more
wine, less beer, more coffee,
less tea, more whiskey, less

swimming, more flying, more snow.
Up there I want to be down,
down here I want to be back

home out of mortality. ('Wouldn't you
want to be their age again?'
sd the lady at my elbow
before the framed
photos of the graduating class,
early '70s.) What? When? I gave the
expected answer, no, not all that

ignorance, living in an
unreal future again. But this?

Back down to the motel, to get cigarettes,
I heard my boots crunching across the snow,
I saw the women looking at me, it

gladdened them that one so
handsome, breezy, comes in,
gets cigarettes (I dreamed last night

they had extracted the cancer,
a California doctor, charged me
7 bucks & wanted to keep the tissue,
it was dry & spongy in his hand
like dry cod out of a barrel.
I agreed, he could market it
better.

I will come
 to some trivial
point, unable to choose,
the right hand
or the left

10

The poem wrestles you
to the ground.

Reg takes the plane up.

I argue w/ Ray Tickson
in Rupert,
that night.

I don't need no
rollercoasters.

I thought we were climbing
100 miles an hour.

n tons of metal,
2 Pratt & Whitneys
hurtling up a
grass blade
vector,

 the seats
next to me filled w/
sleeping women, or
CBC brass, staring
straight ahead



Whatcom Park Cedars

The After Life of Trees

for the protestors at Fairy Creek, British Columbia

After they are separated from their roots

Chain saw hand saw bow saw chop

laid roughly to rest on a truck's bed

buck saw sash saw frame saw pit

and hauled (that word) to a mill

gang edger resaw circular saw whip

two-by-four two-by-six two-by-ten four-by-six etc. etc.

"They're dead!" you say

lumber sawdust wood pellets chip

yet each continues in a new form to bend, buckle, shrink, expand,
change colour
for longer than any human life

and if you plant a “dead” wood sailing mast in a bucket of oil
it will suck up all the oil

“Dead,” you say. “Now it’s useful,” you say.

The few remaining trees continue to nourish birds, animals, insects,
mosses, algae,
remove and store carbon dioxide, produce oxygen, purify air, conserve
water,
prevent soil erosion, offer sanctuary from storm, flood control, delay
forest fires
if allowed to grow in a natural mix of species, contribute to cooling and
oh yes, offer comfort and peace to humans. Beauty, anyone?

How do you measure “use”?

51.

She is poor. I see now why
she paints with house paints and brown paper.
She is a landlady, taxed
to the limits of a temper as short as mine
by the trivia of house guests.
Yet her work is rich
with a thickness of paint
that makes me look again at my own.

Beside hers, my paintings look as if
someone has strained them through a filter,
as if the painter made a focused effort to reveal
nothing. I have flattened my own round curves
under a careful glaze of paint
for which the men praise me.
I was pleased they couldn’t find
a single brush mark. My canvases are
hairless and sleek, smooth as millponds.

The forms remain thick with a feeling
I can’t hide, but the paint lies flattened
as if under glass, untouchable, sealed
from damage
and hurt.

This is a pain I never saw till now,
until I saw Emily’s paint
rolling over the canvas, leaving
her woman’s thick mark, her woman’s finger print.

58.

She pesters me north. Finally I agree—Tofino.
No further.
Bad enough, mile after mile on the back of a wagon
under a green canopy so high it hurts my neck.

She’s right. There’s a presence here
that spooks me. So many
large live things
implacable, immoveable, astute.
Too many. Too large.

No tamed gentility
of Lake George or New England here,
nor the emptiness of Texas.

These trees. These giants. These ghosts
have claimed the land,
the air even, with a damp green
that allows my own small breath
only in the sunlit clearings, which are few.
After the light and dry of desert,
everything here is dark and water.
Abundance drowns me.

Everything is wet: trees, stumps, rocks
are softened into pillows of moss and lichen.
I walk as if through church chambers
of hemlock and cedar, pine, spruce and fir.
Constantly over my shoulder someone watches me.
I want to shout, "I surrender!"
to the next small precious space of air and light.
I look at firewood differently now,
as living limbs.

When Emily leaves me, I yearn
for a human face. I cling, berating her
for bringing me
to this place of too-large-shadows, darkness
at the edge of too much light.

Poems 51. and 58. are taken from an imagined dialogue between Georgia O'Keefe and Emily Carr based
on a meeting that never happened.

Blue Moon Ramble

run-away to MamaDaisy's
at the place called "railroad"
one mile through the woods
where the tracks had been removed
now just a game trail
that exits at the black-top
and the safety of her
mending at the kitchen table
my chair pulled to the woodstove

‡

summer is two month's farm work
in shade-less fields
those callouses long gone
but cat in the sun look
look how old
my hands are today
branches of creases
lattice work
around swollen knuckles
the fingernails
chewed to the quick

‡

a man whose voice
sounded like beer bottles
being dashed in the road
his wife's voice
when he was home
like shattered dishes
swept across
a kitchen floor

‡

the jukebox the girl I danced with
at hillcrest gardens
we always did our wobble
the finger-pop the slide the kick
our dirty sandy cross represent
we retired in different states
never stayed in touch if she
remembers then there are two of us

‡

we sat in the front seat of the car
parked in the front lot of hillcrest gardens
in the reflected glow of the front door
red and blue neons in the long windows
and the slow-dance music from inside
buzzes like a honeybee
and whistles like a mosquito

‡

I apologize to my mother
for not being able
to protect her when I was a kid
she apologized
for not being able to protect me

‡

MamaDaisy's wake
a mourning wreath hangs
on her front door
I step from the porch
into the living room where
the collective grief
is like an underground river
meted out upon me
sorrow spoonful by
spoonful

‡

I was 12 and I tell
MamaDaisy I don't want to be
in anybody's world
if she wasn't in it
she laughed
and kissed my forehead

Equals Rain

We stand on the dead.

The trees' November hearts
skip beats, havoc groundward.

How is this done—the garden and the broom,
the shovel and the grave.

Parked bumper to bumper, cars
make a grief train.

No matter how many times the sky rives
no month is any worse than another.

Simultaneity makes sense only as an image
repeating: rows and rows of corn, headstones.

One can be dead and a guardian.

The rain inevitable
as if sky plus death equals rain.

#

In the plane there's advancement, but
no one has anything to say about it.

We pace the aisle of what happened to the sky.

Our heads and the windows: variant ovals.

One grace: incarnadined dawn
even though its color pollution-derived.

One can be blind and a watchman.

Regardless the plane's westerly direction,
on the inside: backward to the east.

The past increases within the present.

Invisible elsewhere
brown leaves blanket the oblivious, dissolving body.

This day and night, from now on
each day and night, his arms unmuscular.

Blackberrying

It's a port city, famous for its rain—and standing chilled, looking down from one of the many vantage points that dot the scattered neighborhoods, one might say this of Seattle: that it's largely water, wound around lakes and inlets, jeweled with bridges beneath which, as one can see, someone might sleep out of the rain, rolled in old clothes on a mat of cardboard. There are many such spaces in the city, semi-urban, semi-wild, neither wholly public nor private. As an occasional visitor here, I should no doubt by now have acquired a tourist's fluency in the local architecture, restaurants, and various artistic "scenes," the many civic pleasures that lie dormant in the guidebooks. But while some in the city choose bars or bookstores as their refuge, others are drawn to the fringes, the bits of ravine, wood, and wetland islanded now and preserved as small parks and self-guided" nature trails—and so in July, and especially in August, I'd rather be walking the Burke-Gilman Trail, sampling blackberries. Blackberries are at home here among the laddered vegetation: they climb by their thorns.

The Burke-Gilman runs for twelve miles alongside traffic and residential districts, the manicured grounds of the university, following the old rail bed of the Seattle. Lake Shore and Eastern Line. It passes a classified physics lab, an upscale shopping mall, and descends briefly to the

shoreline of Lake Washington, all the while edged with nearly unbroken blackberry thicket. Blackberries grow lushly here, looping and tangling, and wherever a new tip touches down it takes root. It's a popular path, wide enough to accommodate cyclists and joggers and companionable talkers, with an occasional cry of "on your left!" Here and there a road cuts across with a stop sign and a crosswalk, or a row of evergreens stands tall, embellished with large white morning glories.

Morning here sparkles—or else droops from hemlocks, clammy with fog and car fumes, and along the trail the unkempt hedges are dripping and spidery and as eerily alive as old mansions at the end of a cul-de-sac. The berries weight the canes in graceful arcs. Often a fine gauze hazes the fattest clusters, a warning to the casually inquisitive that something small and distraught may lurk behind, ready to run out and defend its home. The tiny spiders are pale and skittish, well-hidden among the serrated leaves and hairs of the berry; rarely, lifting a creeper, you'll glimpse a flourish of delicate sand-coloured legs. But then the sun comes out, the berries, warmed, give off their fragrance—and the fine web rubs off at a touch, vanishing between the fingers after all.

From spring through high summer, as the fruit matures, one can only watch and wait. Pale mauve eyelet blossoms sketched into the shade; hard green nubs and garnet nipples; finally the glistening black-red caviar of the woods. The edges of the path are bright with dandelion and purple thistle, and bees dangle yellow pantaloons of pollen. A kind of temporary order reigns: neatly arranged canes, jet-black jeweled fruit, catlike claws that hook into the backs of hands—a short soft tap on the arm that could be a fleshy berry or a woozily deflected bumblebee. Bindweed clutches and twines, flowering high up in the trees, and a strange lazy obsession gradually takes hold—to keep on picking—just a few more, then a few more after that, the thought of what may lie, in easy reach, beyond the next bend continuously overtaking the resolve to lie down in a patch of sun and sleep. The telltale signs of the blackberry gatherer are everywhere: the lips and tongue, turned grey, the lavender of the teeth, the spots of violet that stain the shoes. The faint inevitable scratches on the

hands and face—forward, back, the dancer’s elegant, almost impossible, extension—and then the figure leaning, with outstretched arm, suddenly pitches forward, full-length, into the thorns.

You’ve come prepared!” I shouted out one afternoon to a stranger still some distance off along the trail. What had a moment earlier appeared to be a city worker approaching in a gleaming hard-hat—to inspect a phone pole, or a hydro line threatened by foliage—had resolved at last into a white-haired woman in a bleached cotton cap. An old hand, I gathered, judging by the utilitarian dungarees—two pairs of peeled juice cans joined by string around her neck, a fifth can carried loosely in the one hand, and a square of plywood, spotted purple, in the other. “That takes planning!” I continued, to which she replied, “It’s wa-ar!,” her voice reaching out along the echoey tunnel of thicket, and I thought: Yes indeed, it’s war—and you have the advantage in every way. Full battle dress, and a kitchen, no doubt, only yards away (we were in a residential section of the trail), whereas I’ve come equipped with only a mouth and two hands. Yes, I continued (silently, and to myself), and by five o’clock you’ll have cleaned out the entire day’s crop. And a woman of your cunning will be back tomorrow, too, to claim the rest ...

Addled by hours in the August heat I lay that night, slowly opening and closing my eyes, blackberry and vine not so much burned as lightly imprinted onto the retina, a mental wallpaper as voluptuously intricate as a Persian border, tattooing the dark with hallucinatory flashes. It was only then that it occurred to me: perhaps I’d misheard, perhaps the woman had only been calling out, in all innocence and friendliness, “It’s wa-arm ...!” I closed my eyes to sleep, but it was brilliant daylight inside, stamped with brambles.

Of course, not all blackberries, even of a species, taste the same, and there are always more to be had, other bushes to be sampled high and low. The biggest sprout on heavy wands at the top of the thicket, tauntingly out of reach. The runts may be seedy, thrillingly sour, or pine-scented and faintly sweet. Then there are those around knee level at the edge of the path, blessed with full sun yet questionable, dusty and within range of urinating dogs. Flavor varies from one side of the path to the other, and

you’ll never know beforehand which are best. There’s no solution but to taste and taste, to let the hours slowly pass ...

An entire summer could be spent like this, meandering back and forth along the trail, telling time by the reclining shadows, tasting, nibbling all day on blackberries. Becoming, finally, like those wanderers in the Chinese tale “Story of the Peachtree Spring,” who come by chance upon prolific, seemingly untended orchards among the upland crags, and having meant only to stop awhile, to rest and eat, instead daily for some weeks among the beautiful (immortal) inhabitants. Like them, perhaps, you might return, becoming homesick, to find not weeks, but generations, passed—your friends and loved ones gone. Only a hand-hewn sign along the trail:

“Al”
 Bodo
 Alvensleben
 Your laughter
 still clear,
 memories dear...
 1914–1988

One of like mind, no doubt, once possessed of a secret share of happiness.

The blackberry is related to the rose, and the blossom bears a resemblance to the wild rose in its frailty and translucence, its fidelity to simple form. Variably tart, the berry and the full-blown flower are akin in fragrance too: denser, earth-borne, wafting on a heavy layer of summer air. And., despite the birds, the army of harvesters descending on the trail, a few well-hidden fruits do manage to survive into the natural process of decay. Fallen to the ground, leaking blue ink into the dust, or moldering uneaten on the vine, a dusty maroon misted with web and rot, repulsive to the touch. To navigate among these, overlooked in their prime, is the task of the true gatherer. To extract, from the depths, the last of the harvest, dead-ripe and brimming with sweetness. The trail’s final, royal, end-of-summer riches.

Blackberries and rose petals taste good together and, freshly rinsed, look unconscionably beautiful in a bowl. Set on a table in the afternoon, amidst the gleaming cutlery, tiny jewels of water still clinging to the hairs. The city is justly famous for its rain, especially in winter. Then each year the rains pass, and along the trail the blackberries return. So too the spiders, whose papery webs, repeated, have endured. Amongst the new year's crop of joggers, cyclists, walkers and harvesters, one finds them once more hard at work in that untended garden.



Wild Iris

Cate Gable
Watershedname

Non-Harming

I wonder what the neighbors think when they see me
 outside with the BB gun shooting at the pigeons
 on our roof. I gave them a copy of my anthology,
The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy,
 and the introduction makes me sound like
 a person who probably wouldn't be shooting
 at pigeons, even if only with a BB gun,
 which doesn't really hurt them (I tell myself)
 but simply encourages them to find
 someplace else to deposit their smeary droppings
 that threaten to turn one side of our house
 into a bad Jackson Pollock painting.
 "Honey, come look at this—isn't that
 the mindfulness guy out there with a gun,
 shooting at his own house?" I'm well aware
 of the irony, but life's like that, isn't it?
 A contradiction wrapped in an absurdity, etc.
 Still, plunking pigeons with a BB gun
 might not fall afoul of the injunction
 to not cause harm. (I thought about shooting
 myself in the foot just to see how much

it hurt but decided against it). I tried
 placing scary-looking plastic owls strategically
 around the roof but the pigeons laughed at that.
 I tried an electronic device that sent out
 a kind of sub-audible (to humans) shrieking,
 imitative of a bird of prey, but they didn't fall for that
 either. I always thought pigeons were dumb,
 but now I'm not so sure. They've outsmarted me,
 so far, not that that's any great accomplishment,
 moving from one side of the roof to the other,
 where the angle for firing is not so good,
 and where the homeowner
 is exposed, even in this early morning half-light,
 to the watchful eyes of the neighbors.

On Turning Sixty-Four

The slowing down is speeding up.

Dōgen Sonata 2

THE FIVE WHITE PLUM PETALS OPEN
WHERE PLUM BLOSSOMS OPEN

Each petal lies back
and presses pollen forward.
The painter Sesshu and the poet Keats
dance
in the cold, stiff earth
among roots and branches
covered with suns and white blossoms.
Each bough of flowers
is an eye
reflecting nothing
in this dewdrop reflecting nothing,
that hangs on the tip of a dark-skinned twig

(D D
R R
O O
P P
P P
I I
N N
G. G.)

Right-now
is the twig.
It is dew and blossoms
as the drop falls.

EVERYONE
SAYS
THIS:

they are petals of one white flower
remembering that in snow worlds
there is snow before blossoms.

Snow and dew are time on the branch,
as the drop made of changing pictures
that the moon shines through,
is falling.

Sound makes a pool
because there is no old age and death.
Death's petals are an eye
and age is shatterproof glass
brushed by a windy branch.

Tiny diamonds spatter
a round nasturtium leaf
and a baby snail
rests in the orange flower

“MAKE THE PRESENT MOMENT THE TRUE SOURCE”

for Gary Snyder

ON THE DRAINBOARD
BLACK ANTS CIRCLE A BUBBLE OF HONEY
bending into the mirroring feast
with antennae taut in the swallowing.

I remember zebras
and wildebeeste at the waterhole
in the edge of the spotlight;
and the elephant tramps in
on padded feet, flailing
red dust from her whooshing trunk.

THE NOISE
MELTS WITH SILENCE
reflecting the braiding
of the white-silver stream
in the waterfall,
pouring over rocks and concrete,
just down the street,
in the glen.

On the slope
under morning stars
I walk ahead of the ripples
traveling in crescent sheets
and I stop to see them
pass me.

Bird calls flood from everywhere
to celebrate the end
of the rain.

I
AM
A SEAL

sloshing

from realm to realm
in “the string theory,” in “the mutual arising,”
in the imagination of youthful muscles
and wild surf. I howl like a coyote
dreaming a future
in silences between raindrops

(Title: taken from Dōgen, 1233)

FLOWER GARLAND FROTH

*For Zenshin Ryufu, Philip Whalen
On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination of Philip Whalen*

THROUGH THE SKANDHAS, THE BUNDLES
OF BRIGHTNESS AND HUNGERS,

arises
more FOAM

making foam with no origin
but mutual reflection

Taste hunger perception thought

NO
JOKE
not even traps

gorgeous manacles

((physical form-bubbles
sensation-bubbles
perception-bubbles
conditioning-bubbles
consciousness-bubbles

‡

MALLARMÉ'S HUGE PASSIONS AND
FRANCESCO CLEMENTE'S
tiny, skinny dark figures in the joy of their excrement
and bright excitement, and Blake's fairies
and caterpillars
swimming in nada, right where we breathe

The Circus of Celebration runs away
with us
(not us with the circus!)
pulling us out of the big top
like kernels from
a wrinkled shell

more foam

‡

FOAM POPPING BY THE SIDE OF THE RIVER
rainbow bubbles burst, while reflecting all
things

from a black smooth rock
made of bubbles

A white hand
reaches
TO FILL A VASE
from the cool stream

Bronze vase clinks
on a stone

foam

More foam

‡

FOAM WHERE A SKUNK DRINKS
from the trickle elegant black and white
fur of foam
Sound of the water

foam bubbles

FUR
OF
A
MOVING TRUCK
in the wet forest Paint chips
on mulch
A huge presence and purpose
bursting into being
with everything

Solid nothing

‡

... SOLID FOAM-BUBBLES BURSTING
INTO OLD SHOES NEW SHOES
black with high tops
bubbles of iridescent soil on
the soles

Smell of redwood and wet mulch
in countless realms of
reflections

IN

JUST
one body

or none
trickling over the mirror

‡

HERE IS THE TRUE CONTENT OF EXPERIENCE

THE UNTRUE CONTENT OF EXPERIENCE

silver raindrops falling on bubbles
Words spill from sleep
Hungry ghosts behind trees
push over dreams NOT

TRUE

Tiny black seeds
rattle in an envelope

BIG SCARLET FLOWERS

Bubbles
Foam

‡

A SWORD WITH EDGES OF FLAME
slashes the walls

BLACK ANTS CIRCLE A BUBBLE OF HONEY
Zebras, wildebeeste,
at the waterhole

Smell of red dust in the air
is foam

Uncoiling fiddle-neck ferns,
astroturf,
voices of wisdom

BLADE THROUGH A RAINBOW MEMBRANE

‡

EVERYTHING SMILING
with haloes and imaginary radiance

ALL FOAM

real
as delusion
and the sunyata physics of pond plants
and hot air ducts
blowing into outburstings
of snow banks
These caves
are inhabited by nothings constructed
of bubbles
I drive them around
and eat them

‡

FALCON SHAPES WOVEN IN GRAY SILK

Tension of plum buds
in night fog

Stars a trillion years
from the mist

BUBBLES

all in one
ONE
IN ALL

Hidden in moss
in the redwoods
near a Butterfinger wrapper

‡

THE SOUND OF THE DOWNPOUR ON WALLS
is bubbles bursting
into stuff of delusion,
fine as a new chip on an old tooth

LIKE
THE TECHNICOLOR MOVIE
of smells projected between raindrops
on a screen of touches and tastes

The message of flannel is foam
for the shoulders
in the perfume
while floorboards shine

Perfectly clear

‡

I RISE PROUD TO BE BEING

As

I

Am

and I

lie

silent

NOT

KNOWING

I

Know

I

Know

the long-gone delicacy

and meat of apricots

sun-heated on branches,

and waves and caverns of fuel

smashing the earth

in the arising

and pouring

of patterns

I love those who fight this

I

HAND

THEM

the primate crown

shimmering

with hunger and automobiles

and velvet and contracts and postage

and duck weed and emeralds

and jazz

THIS IS NOT MINE

THIS WILL NOT BE MINE

THIS IS NOT MINE

THIS WILL NOT BE MINE

This is not mind

This will not be mind

THIS IS NO BODY

THIS WILL NOT BE BODY

Me

is

not

mine

It appears on the tip of an eyelash

A bubble

Foam



Crow Waiting

FLEXIBLE MIND

(for Rob Lewis)

is rooted
in a place.

Most any
place.

THE SECRETARY
of
TRANSPIRATION

knows:

“Water begets water,
soil is the womb,
and vegetation is
the midwife”

before he plants
a future cloud

in the ground
of his bioregion.

Flexible
as water.

Savvy as the crows
ruin lawns
with beaks
hunting
European chafer

beetle grubs.

Crow sushi.

Wily mind
flexible

as
a

CROW.

‡

FLEXIBLE MIND

revels in
the awe of
a new morning

as apprentice
clouds

BIRTH out of the
MOUTH

of a DECEMBER
ARSON
SKY

((no lie))

I

AM

ONLY

HERE

to grow a soul

finish the leftover
bee pollen,
turkey soup,
pickled ginger,
& sink an ear

into the sounds of
Abdullah Ibrahim's
piano

(Mannenberg Revisited)
(soundtrack for the rising pink
salmon, blue-black
morning sky)

dispersing

fifty
seagulls

IT IS ALL THIS

sparkling

ILLUSION

that makes me feel real

& not just a MEATY
STUMBLE of
rotating
CRAVINGS.

‡

FLEXIBLE EYE

takes refuge

in

“the alert pigeon
peering at the sky
through smog
from the hotel roof”

& escapes (for a moment)

being an inmate of

THE WORLD NEXUS

(the endless capitalist
hamster wheel of
doing.)

THE ALARM BELLS
GO OFF

gentle as a
leaf landing

after a December wind's
moment
of clear articulation.

The pandemic's as hard
on the leaf of the BIG
LEAF MAPLE
TREE

as
it
is

on rabbits fighting over
slices of dried apple

& bus drivers
saluting pedestrians
from the next 7.

THIS IS ALL ME

& the fruits of swirling out

WHAT I AM:

An ongoing ache
fumbling for
the point between

THE TWO DUALITIES

& it smells like Nag Champa

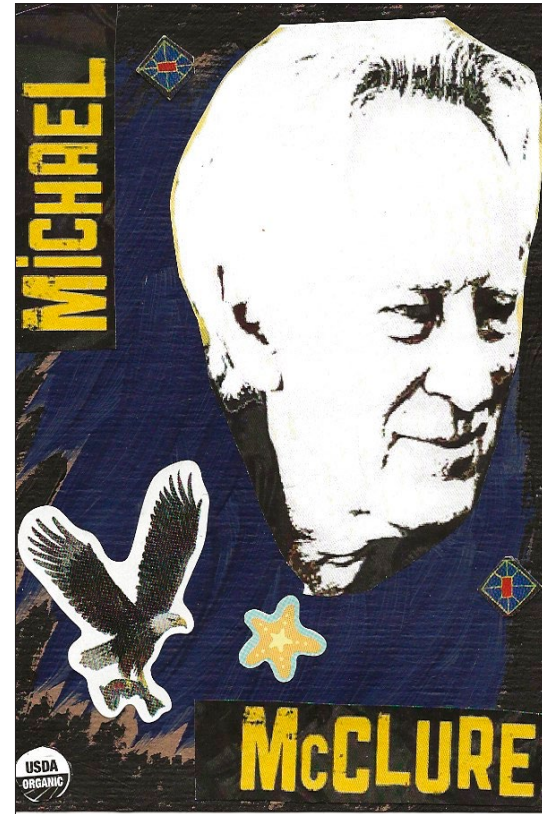
wafting out an empty
Phở restaurant
on a Tuesday

with the SOUL'S MUSIC

still camping out
in
my
head

896. Postcards from the Pandemic (Rebellion Reason)

8 May 2020, Martha Waiters, Fircrest, WA—Martha!



"If his eyes were not already
closed the pleasure would shut
them... He has allowed his
consciousness to become a
blank field." —Michael McClure

and so goes the Rebel Lion
(rebellion) on surrender
to the great life force.
And so goes his one last
act of mammal patriotism
splash of Johnny Walker
Black on his lips. This
is reason but so is
grahhr.

Sonetos de Cascadia 6.15.2019

“we are overrun the dog and I
by the power of light...”
—Mary Norbert Körte, “Lines Bending”

“MONKEY MIND BUILDS CATHEDRALS
of imagination and stone
and tone poems
of stained glass
and bubblegum.”
—Michael McClure, “68th Dharma Devotion”

In the Wake of No Buddha

Were my Zen up to speed I’d write a dharma devotion to the
hummingbird sangha as here they have a temple of water,
sugar and plastic just beyond the temple rabbits have
manifested of steel, hay and the occasional purloined
blueberry. Neither hummingbird nor rabbit has won a

literary lifetime achievement award, but we still like their
soft fur and/or whir as they negotiate our summer heads on
the deck where one evergreen can be seen in outline on
what’s left of the island forest just beyond their temples of
plastic. Were my Zen up to speed I’d see tracers of my
defilements build their own cathedrals of memory of sexual
escapades, gland pulses, cheap bliss and then watch the
whole cycle rinse, repeat & reappear with new characters
merging with sounds of tires on June morning pavement &
the fur of the rabbits pulled up in clumps from the prayer
rug. No, there is a Buddha here, as there is everywhere & in
every sentient being, but he’s waiting until after morning
coffee to find what’s left of his Nirvana.

6:34 am

Lares et Penates

Buddha Bear The Angel The Cat
these Three watch
under their benevolent gaze
scorpions become docile mice
stay outside spiders calmly take
care of flies children cease squabbling
men pick up after themselves

one must pay attention
over long little years to the
long line of little gods ancestors
in portraits lithographs shelved statues
they made us they live with us
we are their children
we are their children

10 April 2019 - 21 July 2019
Mendocino County

In Those Days

Lew was a Leo
long ago when
he talked about the job
taking away those sweet
false dawn mornings
words danced
around the walls
at Soames Bar
Everson's Flats
this bench of
Noyo River
in the woods greatest
teacher of them all all up & down the Coast
there are poets listening
to the woods
some have been there since
the beginning of time
some only 30 years ago
some in a house built yesterday
but they've been thrown
from the same horse
into the light of blindness to everything but the other side
hearing the green green
mornings letting go falling
into them
before they go to work

Willits, February 16, 1999

COVID-19 Chronicles: The Work (So There Plato)

1.
 Floods of glorious inspiration
 wash over you she says it ain't
 always it's mostly hard work
 she says & I get the runs
 when I'm working on a good piece
 she says it's worth it the struggle
 to get to the word because the Word
 started the world & never
 forget that when you're looking
 to make words she says & always
 never forget to say remember
 you will find everything that's lost
 including words to tell stories
what's a poet some thing that can't
go to bed without making a song
 lots of songs lots of beds
 lonely & unforgiving with clean sheets
 covering a secret mattress that holds
 histories unworded maybe forever

2.
 Poets spend endless days & nights
 chasing down the word some stash
 their work Emily Dickinson-style & let
 it out secretly for the rest of us to
 find later without her voice clearing
 our heads some poets can't wait
 to tell at 2:00 AM a new poem
 has just been made
 look out world here it is through
 mail through telephone through

internet (for those in the loop) in books
 of startling glory new & in the hand
 bearing witness to the word bearing
 witness to the Word bearing witness
 to the world it made

3.
 Book in week's mail is handed to her
 along with piece of birthday cake
 white with truffle quality frosting
 she looks at book & cake
 nibbles at poems & sweets
 sweets & poems until her head aches
 with rich sounds rich beyond jewels &
 fur capes beyond brandy & 4-poster beds
 richness that makes her own the word
 & others' word as the magic it is
 a magic that makes rabbits and hats
 worthy of applause

Spicer said poets were radio receivers
 pulling in the word from afar
 Dylan said he reached up with his
 pencil & pulled the word down
 from above
 each poet each direction always
 from out there outside
 the outer banks of reason
 makes poets laugh & cry scream
 & grunt & push breathe push
 breathe another poem into being

15 July 21

Eulogy for Michael McClure

Once long ago in near past she saw him
as Adam striding into cyclones outside the
Gates beyond the comfortable afternoon air

& he brought with him voices
calls to summon those
he named to celebrate

Cougar Jaguarundi Lion
across savannahs & mountains
no matter where they were

he talks with them now
in the company of the Garden
on the comfortable afternoon air

GRAHEER MICHAEL GRAHEER

August 31 2021



Eel River

POSTFACE: CASCADIAN ZEN IN ACTION I

BR Basics: 22 Ways to Come Home

Immersion First!

Pay Attention! Learn to Listen!!

Get Grounded in Place!

Let Go the Ego! (*UnLearn* Projections!!)

Ask Real Questions! Be Open to Surprise!! Even so, Still Need to Quiet the Internal Noise & Social Babble, to Allow the World to *Speak & Become Our Teacher!*

Life-in-Place: Discover the Distinctive Character & Context of this Region as a Whole Life-Place. Learn How Our Implicate World is Woven-in-Depth on Many Levels, Unfolding thru Time. How Our World *Works:*

Energies: Follow Energy Flows! How Process Generates Form through Pulses, Streamings, Rhythms, Waveforms, Turbulent Cascading Flows,

Loops & Cycles, Flowing through the Envelope of Earth & Sea & Sky; How Animating Flows Create Worlds, Giving Life to Life.

Matrix: Learn the Organic Matrix of Nature! How it Gathers Energies, & Everything Pours Forth From & Returns to the Hidden Source in Great Cycles, each in Its Own Time.

Dynamisms: Focus on Dynamisms in the Process of Formation! How Things Come-to-Be and Pass-Away; Transformations: How Things Change and Become One Another. (Begin with Phenomena, not Static Categories). Consider Flows, Sides, Foldings, Plaitings and Inter-Lacings, Layerings, Twists & Turns, Reversals, Metamorphoses, etc.—all the “Turnings” & Loops-in-Time in the Great Dance. Follow How Suites of Intricate Sequences Converge & Diverge in Time; Trace These All the Way Thru the Skein of Metamorphoses. Tell their Story.

Locations: Moving From “Journey to Dwelling,” Learn How Places as Loci Gather-in Energies! Organizing a kind of Force-Field, Generating Focal Centers of Activity, Providing Habitat for Creatures & Human Communities alike. How the “*Chora*” Centers the Social Fabric of Community as a Natural Organic Social Formation, a Web of Relationships, Inscribing a Network of Pathways and Nodes in Regular Rhythms of Movements In-Between “Home & Range,” a nexus connecting a wider world. Links between Community and Commons. How “Where”—as the intimate relation of “Here & There”—Matters.

Contiguities: Follow out Contiguities & Natural Integrities! Search Over the Next Ridge! Find How Places Touch & Connect—“The Hip-Bone is Connected to the Thigh-Bone.” How the Body of the World Articulates Here to There—(Don’t “Parachute” In & Out, Ignoring Everything In-Between Destinations! For all the “Forgotten Country” In-Between is Essential to the Wider Weave. Join the Weave!). Become an Adventurer: Go to the Other Side of the Other Side!

Bounds: Go Find the Boundaries! (Resist All Fiat Boundaries—Find Natural Boundaries). Go from Inner Centers to Outer Bounds. Discover where “Bounding & Binding Edges” Emerge as Ecotones, Where Boundaries Arise as “Convergent Thresholds”—Crossing-Over & Back-Places Joining Margins on Both Sides, Where Energy Fields Shift on Their Axes, Where Worlds Begin & End.

Contexts: Approach All Locations, Things, & People in Their Own Generative Contexts! (Don’t abstract or decontextualize). Enter into Their Worlds! Discern How They Are Woven Together in Time & Place. Remember the Implied Resonant Depths and Layerings Through Time—How the Past Still Speaks.

Depths: Dive Deep! Unfold Layers & Enter Levels in Depth! Go through the 3 Templates: Physical, Ecological, SocioCultural, each in Sequence, to Find Natural Integrities Unfolding Together. Connect Surface to Depth, Locations to Generative Levels. Listen Through for Resonances In-Between Levels.

Configurations: Discover Specific Configurations! Look for Locational Dynamisms—Flowshapes of Energies & Landforms in Time—e.g., the “Ice-Pump” in BC’s Coast Mountains Generating the Last CIS Icesheet (not abstractions like “Climate” as causes). Key to How Regions Act!

Regions: Articulate How the Body of the Place Works! Through its Specific Configurations of Parts & Wholes In-Depth. Connect Locations, Levels, and their Generative Processes Thru Time Above & Below in the Whole Charged Envelope of Earth & Sea & Sky. Discover How the *Region Acts as a Self-Regulating Whole*—the *Regioning* of the Region.

Join the Wider Weave! Always Connect! Reach Out Thru the Seven Levels of BioRegional Address: Home, Community, Watershed, EcoRegion, BioRegion, Continental Slope/Ocean Rim, Planetary Ecosphere. (Forget

the Local-Global Alternation as a Cliché Emptying Out Everything In-Between the Two Poles of the One and the Many—“Do Not Go Too Fast From the Many to the One”!) Learn How to Find Our Way Carefully & Respectfully *Stepwise* Both Ways Up-and-Down the Scale.

Become Attuned to “The Calling Across”—Learn to Listen Deeply to “The Song of the World” and Spirits of Place. Become Present to Presence! Enter creatively into the mutual “Call & Response” giving rise to Poetry, Dance, & Song! Allow the many “Mirrorings” and In-Depth Resonances to Flow Through. Take on the Imagination of the Land! Sing the Place!

Learn the Ethics of Place! As the Practiced Consideration of “Right Action” in Reciprocal Obligations of “Care & Call” in Embodied & Embedded Life-Places with Others Living a Life Together in Depth. In Gratitude for the “Great Good Gift,” as embodied in the “double giveaway” of the Potlatch. Follow the “3 Laws of Moral Ecology.”

Learn CPR! Since Ecology & Community are Two Sides of the Same River of Life, and are Being Lost Together, They Need to Be Restored Together! Learn how to Reweave a Broken World in the Placed Practice of CPR: Conservation, Preservation, & Restoration of Ecology & Community Together!

Learn the Practice of “The Real Work” of Our Time! 1—Restore Integrity of Ecosystems, 2—Rebuild Infrastructure Along Ecological and Community-Based Lines, 3—Revitalize Communities, 4—Regenerate Ties of Local-Regional Economies, 5—Grow a Restorative Life-Place Politics, 6—Celebrate the Place and Build New Grounded Culture.

Create New EcoCultures Celebrating the Gifts of Life and Spirits of Place. Learn How to Tell the Story of Place, in Many Ways and Levels, As We Become the Stories We Tell and Retell. Sing Together and Become a Placed People Here!

Notes to Poems

The epigraph in Mushim Patricia Ikeda’s poem “heart sutra fragment 7” is from Eugenio Montale’s poem “The Prisoner’s Dream,” translated into English by Charles Wright, from the book *The Storm and Other Poems (La Bufera e Altro)*, Oberlin College Press; trans. from the Italian edition (July 31, 1978).

The title of Michael McClure’s poem “MAKE THE PRESENT MOMENT THE TRUE SOURCE” was taken from Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253).

The line in Adelia MacWilliam’s poem, “Six Ways of Looking at a Raven, *“and so the mind loops to knowing”* is borrowed from a poem by Barry McKinnon.

Acknowledgements

Some contributions have been previously published in books or literary journals.

Richard E. Bartow’s artwork appears with the permission of the Richard E. Bartow Estate.

Robin Blaser’s poem “Just an Apple” was previously published in *Never Let the World Go By: Last and Uncollected Poems* (Vancouver, BC: Keefer Street Press, 2011).

Kate Braid’s poems, 51. and 58. were previously published in *Inward to the Bones: Georgia O’Keeffe’s Journey with Emily Carr*, originally published by Polestar Book Publishers, 1998, and republished by Caitlin Press in 2010.

John Brehm’s poem “On Turning Sixty-Four” first appeared in *The Sun Magazine*; “Non-Harming” was first published in *The Gettysburg Review*.

Michael Daley's poems were recently published in *Reinhabited: New & Selected Poems*, Dos Madres press, 2022.

Diane di Prima's poems appear as taken from the unpublished collection, *Buddhist Ruminations*, used with permission from the estate of Diane di Prima, courtesy of Sheppard Paul.

Tess Gallagher's poem, "Cloud-Path" appears in *Is, Is Not*, 2019, Graywolf Press and her poem, "What Cathal Said," first appeared in *Midnight Lantern*, 2011, New and Selected Poems, Graveyard Press.

Images from Joan Giannecchini are part of a series of 3-dimensional art pieces, "The Celestials: Chinese of the Old West" and appear with the permission of the artist. Copyright © 2002, Joan Giannecchini. The work has been shown between 2002 and 2015 at Northern Nevada Art Museum, Artown Reno, Sierra Art Gallery, Great Basin college, Northwest Reno Library, Grace Hudson Museum, and the Tuscarora Museum.
joangiannecchini.com/

Sam Hamill's work appears in *Habitation*, Lost Horse Press, 2014, and is used courtesy of Sam Hamill's Estate.

Brenda Hillman's poem, "Near Jenner" was previously published in *Death Tractates* Wesleyan University Press, "A Hydrology of California, (An eco-poetical alphabet)" was previously published in *Practical Water*, Wesleyan University Press, 2009 and "On Hearing the Golden Crowned Sparrow" was previously published in *In a Few Minutes Before Later*, Wesleyan University Press, 2022.

Jane Hirschfield's poem "For the *Lobaria*, *Usnea*, Witches' Hair, Map Lichen, Beard Lichen, Ground Lichen, Shield Lichen," (c) Jane Hirschfield, from *Come, Thief* (NY: Knopf, 2011); used by permission, all rights reserved. "Mountainal" is from *Ledger* (NY: Knopf, 2020); used by permission, all rights reserved.

Glenn "Chip" Hughes' poems, "A Dream of the Poet Robert Sund" and "In Robert Sund's Shack" previously appeared in *A Flutter of Birds Passing Through Heaven: A Tribute to Robert Sund* (Good Deed Rain, Bellingham), and in *Preparing to Wake Up* (Longhouse, West Brattleboro, VT). "Portrait of Arthur" has not appeared elsewhere, except on a piece of paper tacked to the wooden wall above the meditation bench in the zendo in Arroyo Seco, near Taos, for which Arthur was the caretaker.

Holly J. Hughes' poems first appeared in *Hold Fast*, published by Empty Bowl Press, 2021.

Mushim Patricia Ikeda's poem "heart sutra fragment 3" was first published in *Tricycle Magazine: The Buddhist Review* in August 2020.

Tom Jay's poems are from *The Blossoms are Ghosts at the Wedding*, expanded edition, Empty Bowl Press, 2019.

Mary Norbert Körte's poems are published in her newest book, *Jumping in an American River*, September, 2022, which encompasses her life work.

Ramon Kubicek's images are copyright by the artist.

Joanne Kyger's poems, "Unlimited Growth on a Planet of Finite Size," and "Take a Deep Breath" appeared in *On Time*, City Lights, 2015. "Philip Whalen's Hat" and "Wide Mind" appeared in *About Now*, National Poetry Foundation, Orono, Maine, 2007.

Samuel Green's poem, "Postcard to Han Shan from Haro Strait" appears with permission from the author, and "Shoveling the Outhouse on Gary Snyder's Birthday" appeared in *Disturbing the Light* (2020) and is used with permission from Carnegie Mellon Press.

Ray Grigg wrote the substance of his essay as an oral presentation for a "Speak to the Wild" environmental event at BC's Well's Grey Park in 2013,

but it was never published. It was intended to be by the organizer, but that project never came to fruition.

All of Denise Levertov's poems appear with the permission of her estate.

Peter Levitt's poem "Orca Wedding" first appeared in *Love of the Salish Sea Islands* (Mothertongue Publications 2019) and "Pale Shadow" and "Within Within" first appeared in *Within Within* (Black Moss Press 2007).

Jami Macarty's poem "Equals Rain" is from her book, *The Minuses*, a 2020 Mountain West poetry series title, reprinted with the permission of the Center for Literary Publishing.

Adelia MacWilliam's poems are from her unpublished manuscript, *Poaching from the Dark*.

Daphne Marlatt's poem "generation, generations at the mouth" quoted in her essay, "Reflections on Poetic Composition, Ecological Awareness, and Buddhist Thought," appears in *Steveston*, photographs by Robert Minden (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2001).

Michael McClure's poems first appeared in *Mulekick Blues*, City Lights, 2021 and are used with the permission of Amy Evans McClure.

Tim McNulty's poems, "Above Hoh Valley" and "Night, Sourdough Mountain Lookout" are from *Ascendance*, published by Pleasure Boat Studio, 2013.

Paul Nelson's poems "FLEXIBLE MIND, FLEXIBLE MIND" and "FLEXIBLE EYE" are from the unpublished manuscript *FLEXIBLE MIND*. 896. Postcards from the Pandemic (Rebellion Reason) is unpublished and written as part of the 2020 Poetry Postcard Fest. "In the Wake of No Buddha" is from *Sonetos de Cascadia*.

Mike O'Connor's poem, "Hunting the Hunter" is from *From The Rainshadow*, Empty Bowl, 1983) and "Suzuki, Sasaki, Suzuki," is from *Discovery Bay Zendo*, ca. 1975; from *The Rainshadow*, Empty Bowl, 1983).

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Susan Point's artwork is included in *Cascadian Zen* courtesy of the artist.

Rena Priest's poem, "The Glimmer," was published in *Northwest Know-How: Beaches*, illustrated by Jake Stroumbos, 2022.

Bob Pyle's poems "The Elk Come" and "The Pulaski on the Flagpole" were previously published in *Letting the Flies Out*, 2013. "Three A.M. at the All-night Logging Show" was first published in *Evolution of the Genus Iris*, Lost Horse Press, 2014 and "I Cover the Waterfront" was first published in *The Tidewater Reach*, 2020.

The first page of Bob Redmond's poems appeared in *The Zen Space*, July 2020 and his poems on the second page appeared in various journals.

Judith Roche's poem "The Three Bones in the Inner Ear Run on Trust Alone" first appeared in *Ghosts*, Port Townsend: Empty Bowl Press, 1984.

Andrew Schelling's poems, "Somehow," "Cold Mountain," and "ULA," and "A Milarepa Shrine in Ladakh" are from *The Facts at Dog Tank Spring*, Dos Madres Press, 2020, and "Listening to an Autumn Raga in Springtime" is from *Tiny Spoon*. Issue 6, Winter 2020/2021, Solitude.

Cedar Sigo's poems, "We are the Ancestors" and "Starting from Old Man House (What did you learn here?)" are both from *All This Time* (Wave

Books, 2021) and his poem “In and Around Port Angeles” is from *Royals* (Wave Books, 2017), all three poems used with permission of the author.

Gary Snyder’s poems are used with his permission, and appear as printed in his *Collected Poems*, Library of America, 2022.

George Stanley’s poem, “Mountains and Air” was first published in *North of California St*, New Star Press, 2014.

Robert Sund’s poems, “Bunch Grass 34,” “Homage to Ryōkan,” “Laura’s Birthday,” “Herons and Swallows,” “April Has Turned Cold” and “The Rest of the Way” first appeared in *Poems from Ish River Country: Collected Poems & Translations*, Shoemaker & Hoard, 2004

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Zenshin Philip Whalen’s poems are used with the permission of Norman Fischer, executor of the Whalen Estate.

All photographs by Nathan Wirth are by permission of the photographer.

Bill Yake’s poem, “The Salish Prairies” was first published as part of the city of Olympia’s Poetry on the Bus Project. “Slough, Decay, and the Odor of Soil” was first published by Windfall, 2011. “Found at a Homeless Camp” was first published in *Cascadia Review*, 2015. “Encountering the Owl” was first published in *Terrain: A Journal of Built + Natural Environments*, 2016. “Song to Wed By” was first published in *Raven Chronicles*, 2016.

Contributors’ Bios, Volume One

Richard E. Bartow (Wiyot) is one of Oregon’s most important contemporary artists. Bartow was born in Newport, Oregon, and raised on the homestead his great-grandfather claimed on an estuary of Yaquina Bay. He graduated from Western Oregon State College in Secondary Art Education and served in Vietnam. Central to Bartow’s work is the theme of transformation, particularly between the human and animal realms, often juxtaposing the physical and spiritual dimensions. A leader in contemporary Native American art, his work is held in over 100 public collections and is represented in galleries and museums world-wide, including the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Born in Denver in 1925, raised in Twin Falls, Idaho, poet, editor, and essayist Robin Blaser was educated at the University of California-Berkeley. He helped spark the Berkeley Poetry Renaissance in the 1940s that preceded the San Francisco poetry renaissance of the fifties and 1960s. An immigrant to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1966, Blaser established himself as a key figure on the west coast of B.C. and an influence among Canadian experimental poets. His poetry and prose have been collected into three volumes: *The Holy Forest: Collected Poems of Robin Blaser* (2007); *The Fire: Collected Essays of Robin Blaser* (2006), and *Even on Sunday*. (2002). Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University, he received the Order of Canada in 2005.

Roo Borson is a poet and essayist. Her books include the collaborative works *Introduction to the Introduction to Wang Wei* by Pain Not Bread (Roo Borson, Kim Maltman, and Andy Patton), and *Box Kite: Prose Poems by Baziju* (Roo Borson and Kim Maltman). Her most recent solo work is a triptych of poetry books linked through imagery and formal variation: *Short Journey Upriver Toward Oishida*, followed by *Rain; road; an open boat*, followed by *Cardinal in the Eastern White Cedar*. Born in Berkeley, California, she lives along Taddle Creek with poet and theoretical physicist Kim Maltman.

In addition to working for fifteen years as a construction carpenter, **Kate Braid** has published sixteen books of non-fiction and prize-winning poetry, including co-editing with Sandy Shreve the ground-breaking anthology, *In Fine Form: A Contemporary Look at Canadian Form Poetry*. Her latest poetry book is *Elemental* (Caitlin, 2018). She lives with her partner and new puppy in Victoria and on Pender Island, B.C., on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen people of the Songhees, Esquimalt, and Tsawout First Nations.

John Brehm's most recent books are *No Day at the Beach* (poems), *The Dharma of Poetry* (essays), and *The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy* (anthology). He lives in Portland, Oregon, which lies within the Willamette River Basin. "On Turning Sixty-Four" first appeared in *The Sun Magazine*; "Non-Harming" was first published in *The Gettysburg Review*.

Robert Bringhurst was born in Los Angeles in 1946. He has lived and worked in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and South America, but his home for most of the past five decades has been the British Columbia coast. His *Selected Poems* are published in London by Jonathan Cape, in the USA by Copper Canyon, and in Canada by Gaspereau Press. He is trained as a linguist and is widely known for his translations from Haida and other Native American languages, and for his typographic work. He lives in Quadra Island's Heriot Bay watershed.

Terran Campbell is an elder non-binary poet, mental health professional, Zen practitioner, activist, and eco-feminist, with a background in epistemology, cognition and Buddhist psychology. They have been arrested numerous times for actions protecting the earth, including being a kayak-activist. They write primarily haiku forms, but also long poems and flash non-fiction. Their work has appeared in *Kingfisher*, *Femku*, and other anthologies. They reside near Seattle, Washington, on the land of the Duwamish and Coast Salish People in the Cedar River Watershed.

Michael Daley lives in Anacortes, Washington, on Fidalgo Island in the Rosario Strait-Strait of Juan de Fuca Watershed, and on the Samish Nation's traditional land. He taught English at Mount Vernon High School from 1990 to 2012. In retirement, he became the publisher of Empty Bowl press, which he helped found in 1976. In 2022, Pleasure Boat Studio published his novel, *Telemachus*; Dos Madres Press published *Reinhabited: New & Selected Poems*, and Cervena Barva published his poetry collection, *True Heresies*.

Alice Derry is the author of five volumes of poetry, most recently *Hunger* (MoonPath 2018) along with three chapbooks, including translations of poems by Rainer Rilke. She taught for thirty years at Peninsula College where she curated the Foothills Poetry Series. Since retirement, she has been active in helping local tribal members access poetry and has taught a number of community workshops. Raymond Carver chose her first poetry manuscript, *Stages of Twilight*, for the King County (Seattle) Arts Prize. *Strangers to their Courage* was a finalist for the Washington Book Award. Her new manuscript, *Asking*, will appear from MoonPath Press in 2022. She lives and works on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, traditionally Klallam land. Her website is www.alicederry.com.

Diane di Prima was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1934. She attended Swarthmore College for two years before moving to Greenwich Village in Manhattan, then San Francisco in 1968, where she was named Poet Laureate in 2009. Di Prima published more than forty books, including *This Kind of Bird Flies Backward* (1958), *Loba* (1978, 1998), and *Pieces of a Song: Selected Poems* (2001). Author of the short story collection *Dinners and Nightmares* (1960), the semi-autobiographical *Memoirs of a Beatnik* (1968), and *Recollections of My Life as a Woman: The New York Years* (2001). She lived in northern California until her death in late 2020.

Cate Gable's work as a poet and journalist is rooted in place—a peninsula west-facing the Pacific Ocean; east-facing Willapa Bay; and south-facing the mouth of the Columbia River. With a BA (University of Pennsylvania); and MA (University of WA); and an MFA (Rainier Writing Program), Gable has won poetry awards from the *Yakima Herald-Republic*, *SF Bay Guardian*, Hoffman Center for the Arts, and Hawaii Public Radio. Chapbook *Chère Alice: Three Lives* was part of a UC Berkeley Bancroft Library exhibit. Her environmental reporting awards include Washington Newspaper Publishers Association; Dolly Connelly; and Grantham Prize for Excellence. Recent poetry has appeared in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Bryant Literary Journal*, *Writers Resist*, *Washington 129*, and *Samthology, A Tribute to Sam Hamill*.

Tess Gallagher's eleventh volume of poetry, *Is, Is Not*, was published May 2019 by Graywolf Press. *Midnight Lantern: New and Selected Poems*, is the most comprehensive offering of her poems. Other poetry includes *Dear Ghosts* and *Moon Crossing Bridge*. Gallagher's *The Man from Kinvara: Selected Stories* is the basis for film episodes under development. She divides her time between her hometown of Port Angeles, Washington, and her cottage in the West of Ireland. She is the literary executor of her late husband, Raymond Carver, and will be honored in a festival with him in 2024 by Peninsula College.

Joan Giannecchini is a mixed media and conceptual artist whose work has appeared in galleries and museums throughout the United States and Africa. Her body of work focuses mainly on socially relevant themes, using innovative techniques to spark a visceral response from her audience. The latest, *The Celestials*, was a seven-year project chronicling a piece of American history created by nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants. Her work was recently featured in *Women Artists of the Great Basin* by Mary Lee Fulkerson. She splits her time between Northern California and her singlewide in the ghost town of Tuscarora, Nevada.

Shirley Graham lives with her husband, the poet and Zen teacher Peter Levitt, in the Salt Spring watershed on Salt Spring Island (which is called *xʷənenəč* by the Coast Salish people). Her published books include *Blue Notes*, *What Someone Wanted*, *Book of Blue*, and *Shakespearean Blues*, the latter of which was a finalist in Canada's Fred Cogswell Award for Excellence in Poetry. She is a long-time Soto Zen practitioner in the Suzuki-Roshi lineage, and works as a psychologist in British Columbia. Cusheon Lake Watershed.

Samuel Green's most recent collection of poems is *Disturbing the Light* (2020). He has lived on a remote island in the San Juan Archipelago for the past forty years in a log house he and his wife built themselves. He and his wife Sally produced the legendary letterpress poetry imprint, Brooding Heron, and he was Washington's inaugural poet laureate.

Ray Grigg is the author of numerous internationally sold books on Daoism and Zen, which can be previewed at www.raygrigg.com. His last two are *The Zen of an Earth Mythology* and *Zen Tzu: A Zen Transcription of Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching*. Environmental issues also occupy his attention and writings. He lives with his wife—a classical musician—in a self-built home on ten acres of forested land on Quadra Island, British Columbia, Canada. A large organic garden and orchard supply much of their food needs. Their pets are the wild birds and animals that share their property.

Sam Hamill was born in 1943 and grew up on a Utah farm. After serving four years in the Marine Corps, he attended Los Angeles Valley College and the University of California, Santa Barbara. Founding Editor of Copper Canyon Press for thirty-two years, he published more than forty books of original poetry, literary essays, and translations from Classical Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Latin, Estonian, and Vietnamese. Hamill directed the Port Townsend Writers Conference for ten years and founded Poets Against the War in 2003. His collected poems, *Habitation*, was published by Lost Horse Press in 2014. He died in 2018 at his home in Anacortes, Washington.

Josh Hayes is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Alvernia University. He is editor of *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition* (2015); *Heidegger in the Islamic World* (2019); and *Philosophy in the American West: A Geography of Thought* (2020). His current research explores the contemporary relevance of nature, place, and community from a global philosophical perspective informed by the practice of Zen Buddhism. He currently resides in the Schuylkill River Valley Watershed of southeastern Pennsylvania.

Brenda Hillman is the author of eleven books of poetry, including *Extra Hidden Life, among the Days* (2018), and *In a Few Minutes Before Later* (2022). Her work has received the William Carlos Williams Award, the Griffin International Prize for Poetry, and most recently, the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award for Innovative Writing. Recently she co-translated *At Your Feet* by Brazilian poet Ana Cristina Cesar. Hillman is a Chancellor Emerita of the Academy of American Poets, directs the Community of Writers Poetry Week, and teaches at St. Mary's College of California. She lives on Ohlone land and drinks water that originates in the Mokelumne River watershed.

Jane Hirshfield is the author of nine collections of poetry, including *Ledger* (2020), *The Beauty* (2015), long-listed for the National Book Award, and *Given Sugar, Given Salt* (2001), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. A former chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, she was elected in 2019 into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Her work has been translated into seventeen languages and appears in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The TLS*, *Poetry*, and ten editions of *The Best American Poetry*.

Alicia Hokanson lives in Seattle in the Piper's Creek watershed. She also spends time on Waldron Island, within the San Juan Islands watershed in the Salish Sea. Her first collection of poems, *Mapping the Distance*, was selected by Carolyn Kizer for the King County Arts Commission publication prize. Two chapbooks, *Phosphorous* and *Insistent in the Skin*, were published by Brooding Heron Press. Her newest collection, *Perishable*

World, was released by Pleasure Boat Studio in the summer of 2021, and awarded the Eyelands Book Awards grand prize for poetry in December 2021.

Glenn "Chip" Hughes is the author of the chapbooks *Sleeping at the Open Window* (2005) and *Erato: Twenty Elegies* (2010), and of the booklet *Preparing to Wake Up* (2021). His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, and many other journals. He edited Robert Sund's *Taos Mountain* (2006), and is the co-editor, with Tim McNulty, of *Notes from Disappearing Lake: The River Journals of Robert Sund* (2012); and *First Glimpse of Swallows: Uncollected Poems of Robert Sund* (2022). He has also authored, edited, or co-edited eleven books of philosophy. He grew up in Seattle, in the Lake Washington watershed.

Holly J. Hughes is the author of *Hold Fast, Sailing by Ravens*, co-author of *The Pen and The Bell: Mindful Writing in a Busy World*, and editor of *Beyond Forgetting: Poetry and Prose about Alzheimer's Disease*. Her fine art chapbook *Passings* received an American Book Award in 2017. She lives on the Olympic Peninsula, where she leads writing and mindfulness workshops, consults as a writing coach/editor, and directs Flying Squirrel Studio, which offers writing residencies for women. She acknowledges the Chemakum, S'Klallam and Suquamish people for their ongoing stewardship of the lands and waters she calls home. hollyjhughes.com

Mushim Patricia Ikeda is a widely published poet, nonfiction writer, and Buddhist teacher trained originally in the Korean Zen Buddhist lineage in the 1980s. She holds an MFA from the University of Iowa Graduate Writers Workshop and lives in Oakland, California. Her work appears in the context of Asian North American poetry in the anthologies *Breaking Silence: An Anthology of Asian-American Poets* (1984) and *Premonitions: The Kaya Anthology of New Asian North American Poetry* (1995). (She has published using the names Patricia Y. Ikeda, Patricia Ikeda-Nash, Mushim Ikeda, etc.) More info: www.mushimikeda.com

Tom Jay was born in Manhattan, Kansas, in 1943. An active member of the Northwest art community since 1966, he built the first bronze casting facility for Seattle University, and supervised construction of casting facilities at the University of Washington. Receiving an MFA from the University of Washington in 1969, he established Riverdog Fine Arts Foundry, now The Lateral Line Gallery and Studio, which cast his own work and that of sculptors throughout the Northwest. He engaged the community imagination in place-based culture through art, festivals, educational adventures, and salmon restoration projects. He died in 2019.

Mary Norbert Körte was born June 7, 1934, in Oakland, California, and was a member of a Dominican Order for sixteen years. She left the order when she was thirty-four and fell madly in love. The couple moved to the Mendocino County woods in the Noyo River watershed where Mary has lived ever since, among the redwoods which she describes as “mysterious beings.” What started her writing in Grade 9 was a Scots balladeer named Kate Rennie Orchard who taught the old way, telling stories, the same way that Indigenous people teach. Mary was an exotic among the Beats and the hippies, a nun running around with the likes of Diane di Prima, Lou Welch, Michael McClure, and Allan Ginsberg. Her newest book, *Jumping in An American River*, which encompasses her life’s work, appeared in September 2022.

Ramon Kubicek: Raised in Montreal, educated in Montreal, England, and Vancouver, now lives on the Sunshine Coast, B.C., taught for over two decades in the university system, mostly at Emily Carr University of Art + Design and Langara College in disciplines like art history, literature, creative writing, and classics. Works full time as a visual artist. Has two intelligent, fierce, lovely daughters. Maintains studios in Roberts Creek, B.C., and Montreal, and believes that one’s true geography becomes apparent after years of walking. Has found no evidence that he is a reincarnation of Basho or Attar. Believes the most important human quality is humour. And, of course, kindness, but animals are kind as well. Not so sure about their sense of humour. www.ramonkubicekart.com

One of the major women poets of the San Francisco Renaissance, **Joanne Kyger** was born in 1934 in Vallejo, California, where she became a member of the circle of poets around Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan. In 1960, she and then-husband Gary Snyder traveled in Japan and India, where she, along with Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky, met the Dalai Lama. She returned to California in 1964 and published her first book, *The Tapestry and the Web* in 1965. In 1969, she settled in Bolinas for the rest of her life until her death in 2017. She published over thirty books of poetry and prose, including *Strange Big Moon*, *The Japan and India Journals: 1960–1964* (2000), *As Ever, Selected Poems* (2002), and *About Now, Collected Poems* (2007), which won the 2008 Josephine Miles Award from PEN Oakland.

Denise Levertov was born in 1923 in London and educated at home by her mother. She was a lifelong autodidact and student of the arts, literature, and languages. Her first book of poems, *The Double Image*, was published by Cresset Press, London, in 1946 and in 1948 she came to the U.S. Levertov taught at University of Massachusetts, Boston, Tufts, Brandeis and Stanford Universities. She won the 1996 Governor’s Writers Award, from the Washington State Commission for the Humanities and lived in Seattle the last eight years of her life, until her death on December 20, 1997, in Seattle. Levertov published more than thirty books.

Peter Levitt is the author of ten books of poetry, including *Within Within*, *One Hundred Butterflies*, and *Bright Root, Dark Root*. He is also the author of *Fingerpainting on the Moon: Writing and Creativity as a Path to Freedom*, co-translator (with Rebecca Nie) of *Yin Mountain: The Immortal Poetry of Three Daoist Women*, and co-translator (with Kazuaki Tanahashi) of *The Complete Cold Mountain: Poems of the Legendary Hermit Hanshan* and *A Flock of Fools: Ancient Buddhist Tales of Wisdom and Laughter*. In addition, he and Tanahashi co-edited *The Essential Dōgen: Writings of the Great Zen Master*. Levitt also edited Thich Nhat Hanh’s classic *The Heart of Understanding*. In 1989, he received the prestigious Lannan Foundation Award in Poetry. He is the founding and guiding teacher of the Salt Spring Zen Circle community in British Columbia.

Gary Copeland Lilley is the author of eight books of poetry, the most recent being *The Bushman's Medicine Show* (2017), and a chapbook, *The Hog Killing* (2018). He is originally from North Carolina and now lives in the Pacific Northwest. He has received the DC Commission on the Arts Fellowship for Poetry and is published in numerous anthologies and journals, including *The Best American Poetry 2014*, *Willow Springs*, *The Swamp*, *Waxwing*, *Taos Journal of Poetry and Art*, and *African American Review*. He is a Cave Canem Fellow.

David McCloskey lives where he was born in McKenzie-Willamette land, foothills of the Cascades of western Oregon, “Kalapuya Illahee.” An Emeritus Professor from Seattle University, he’s considered “The Father of Cascadia,” and has been mapping the distinctive character and context of Western bioregions for over forty years, creating the first “Ish River Country” map in 1987, the original “Cascadia” map (1988), “The Ecoregions of Cascadia” map (1997) (all handdrawn); plus “Cascadia” (2015), the “Bioregions of Western North America” (2014), and the “Ish River-Salish Sea Map” (2022) (all GIS). He’s dreaming of an “Atlas of Cascadia” while working on a second edition of the Cascadia Map.

Michael McClure (1932–2020), award-winning poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, songwriter, founding member of the Beat Generation, authored more than forty books. Translations into French, German, Croatian, Spanish, Japanese. His journalism was featured in *Rolling Stone*, *Vanity Fair*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*. The actors in his play *The Beard* were arrested at nineteen consecutive LA performances, before winning the censorship trial in California, and later an Obie in New York. *Of Indigo and Saffron*, 1959–2010, is an essential poetry collection. Posthumously, *Mule Kick Blues: And Last Poems*. His last quarter-century and death-day lived by the headwater stream Peralta Creek.

Tim McNulty is a poet, essayist, and natural history writer. He is the author of three poetry collections: *Ascendance*, published by Pleasure Boat Studio, *In Blue Mountain Dusk*, and *Pawtracks*, and ten poetry chapbooks.

Tim is also the author of eleven books on natural history, including *Olympic National Park: A Natural History* (University of Washington Press), and *Washington's Mount Rainier National Park*. He has received the Washington State Book Award and the National Outdoor Book Award. He lives in the Dungeness River watershed, foothills of Washington's Olympic Mountains and is active in Northwest environmental issues. timmcnulty.com

Adelia MacWilliam is currently completing a manuscript that documents what happens when you cast the mythic imagination across a piece of land that has been part of your family for over 100 years. Everything will out! Her work has been published in various literary journals and anthologies. She lives on Vancouver Island in the Koksilah watershed and has been associated with Cascadia Poetics Lab for several years, inspired by the poetics and workshops. She is grateful and honoured to be part of the creation of *Cascadian Zen*.

Jami Macarty gratefully recognizes Native Nations of the West—especially the Coast Salish and Tohono O’odham—as the traditional and rightful owners of lands where Jami has the great privilege to live and work—as a teacher at Simon Fraser University, as an independent editor, and as a writer of essays, reviews, and poetry. Jami is the author of *The Minuses* (2020), winner of the 2020 New Mexico/Arizona Book Award—Poetry Arizona, and three chapbooks, including *Mind of Spring* (2017), winner of the 2017 Vallum Chapbook Award. Jami’s work has been honored by financial support from Arizona Commission on the Arts, British Columbia Arts Council, and by editors at journals such as *The Capilano Review*, *Interim*, *Vallum*, and *Volt*. “Equals Rain” is from her book, *The Minuses*, a 2020 Mountain West poetry series title, reprinted with the permission of the Center for Literary Publishing.

Vancouver poet and novelist, **Daphne Marlatt**, dwells gratefully between the Fraser River and Burrard Inlet on traditional Musqueam territory in a downtown eastside Vancouver neighbourhood. In 2017 Talonbooks pub-

lished forty years of her collected earlier poetry, *Intertidal*, edited by Susan Holbrook. Her most recent title *Then Now* (2021) is a prose and poetry memoir. She is a Vajrayana Buddhist practitioner, under the guidance of Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, for some thirty years now.

Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs is a professor of modern languages and women and gender studies at Seattle University, where she is also the director of the Center for the Study of Justice in Society. She is also an internationally renowned Chicana poet and cultural worker.

Poet and interviewer **Paul E. Nelson's** the son of a labor activist father and Cuban immigrant mother. He founded the Cascadia Poetics LAB (formerly SPLAB) and the Cascadia Poetry Festival. Since 1993, CPL's produced hundreds of poetry events and 700 hours of interview programming with legendary poets and whole systems activists. Books include *Haibun de la Serna, A Time Before Slaughter/Pig War: & Other Songs of Cascadia, American Prophets* (interviews 1994-2012), *American Sentences*, and *Organic in Cascadia: A Sequence of Energies*. Co-editor of *Make It True: Poetry From Cascadia, 56 Days of August: Poetry Postcards, Samthology: A Tribute to Sam Hamill*, and *Make it True meets Medusario*, he was awarded a residency at The Lake from the Morris Graves Foundation in Loleta, CA, and the 2014 Robin Blaser Award from *The Capilano Review*. Literary Executor for the late poet Sam Hamill, Paul lives in Rainier Beach, in the Cascadia bioregion's Cedar River watershed at the mouth of TUX woo' kwib Creek and writes an American Sentence every day.

Mike O'Connor was an editor, writer, poet, and translator of Chinese literature. He published three volumes of his own poetry in addition to translating two volumes of the work of Buddhist poet Chia Tao. Born in Washington, he farmed and planted trees as part of a reforestation project. He then spent many years working in Taiwan as a journalist. He returned to Port Townsend in his later years. He died in early 2021.

Dennis Parks (1938–2021) is a ceramist who moved to the rural ghost town of Tuscarora in 1966, where he established the internationally known Tuscarora Pottery School. Parks pioneered a process using native clays that are single-fired in kilns fueled with recycled crankcase oil. Recognized for his innovative use of text, Parks often imprints written fragments from classical literature, political puns, and poetry onto his works. His stoneware has been honored worldwide for its wide range of inventive forms, and his work has been exhibited in museums in over twenty countries around the world.

Elaine Parks is a ceramicist and a Los Angeles native. She received her MFA from California State University, Los Angeles, in 1999, then moved from a town of fourteen million to Tuscarora, a town of fourteen. Her work has been exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. Elaine taught art for seven years at Great Basin College in Elko and twice received the Nevada Arts Council Fellowship Award. She is an instructor, co-director, and board member of the Tuscarora Pottery School and a board member of Double Scoop Art.

Susan Point, O.C., RCA, D.Litt. hon, DFA. hon (1952–) is a descendant of the Musqueam. Susan's distinct style has inspired a movement in Coast Salish art. She draws creativity from her ancestors' stories, and she forged the use of non-traditional materials and techniques, therefore inspiring generations of artists. Susan is most proud to be an Officer of the Order of Canada and has been presented with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for her contributions to Canada. In 2020 Susan was awarded Chevalier in the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, Order of France, French Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

Bill Porter, who publishes translations from the Chinese under the name Red Pine, was born in 1943 in Van Nuys, California, and grew up in Northern Idaho. After a tour of duty in the US[uvI] Army 1964–67, he attended college at UC Santa Barbara and majored in Anthropology. In 1970, he entered graduate school at Columbia University. While he was in New York,

he became interested in Buddhism, and in 1972 he left America for a Buddhist monastery in Taiwan. After three years with the monks and nuns, he struck out on his own and supported himself by teaching English and later by working as a journalist at English-language radio stations in Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1993, he returned to America and has lived ever since in Port Townsend, Washington, while supporting himself as an independent scholar and translator.

Rena Priest is a citizen of the Lhaq'temish [Lummi] Nation. She currently serves as Washington State Poet Laureate (2021–2023) and is the 2022 Maxine Cushing Gray Distinguished Writing Fellow. She is the recipient of an Allied Arts Foundation Professional Poets Award, and fellowships from Indigenous Nations Poets and the Vadon Foundation. Her debut collection *Patriarchy Blues* won an American Book Award. Her latest book, *Northwest Know-How: Beaches* includes poems and retellings of legends that celebrate salmon, orcas, and other marine life, together with descriptions of twenty-nine beaches on the Washington and Oregon coastline. Learn more at renapriest.com.

Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma is an author, translator, teacher, and performer. His translation of the classical Tamil masterpiece on ethics, power, and love, *The Kural: Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural*, was recently published by Beacon Press. Other books include *The Safety of Edges* (poems), *Give, Eat, and Live: Poems of Avvaiyar* (translated from the Tamil) and *Body and Earth* (with the artist C.F. John). He speaks and performs widely, teaches for the Cozy Grammar series of online video courses, and has received grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, 4Culture, Artist Trust, and the U.S. Fulbright Program. thomaspruiksma.com

Robert Michael Pyle has been writing essay, poetry, fiction, and natural history in Cascadia for fifty years. The first of his twenty-five books, *Watching Washington Butterflies* (1974) was followed by *The Butterflies of Cascadia* in 2001 and *The Butterflies of the Pacific Northwest* in 2018. *Wintergreen: Rambles in a Ravaged Land* won the 1986 John Burroughs Medal for

distinguished nature writing, and *Nature Matrix* was finalist for the 2021 PEN America Award for the Art of the Essay. The latest of four collections of poetry, *The Tidewater Reach* (2021), celebrates Pyle's forty-year residency on Grays River in the Lower Columbia River watershed.

Bob Redmond discovered a passion for haiku and bees in 2005, while a writer-in-residence at Seattle's Hugo House. A professional beekeeper since 2009, his interest in reconciling ecology and urbanization led to him instigating several pollinator restoration projects in the Green/Duwamish watershed. Winner of the 2021 Snapshot Press Book Award, Bob lives in South Seattle with his wife and son. Watershed: Green/ Duwamish.

Judith Roche (1941–2019) was the author of four poetry collections, the last of which was *All Fire All Water* (Black Heron Press, 2015). Her book *Wisdom of the Body* (2007) was an American Book Award winner. Roche has published widely in various journals and magazines and has had poems installed on several Seattle area public art projects. As Literary Arts Director for One Reel she produced the Bumbershoot Bookfair and Literary Program for over twenty years. She was Distinguished Northwest Writer-in-Residence at Seattle University in 2007 and also taught at the Richard Hugo House and Cornish College of the Arts. She has work published in *Make it True: Poetry from Cascadia* (Leaf Press, 2015).

Albert Saijo was a beat poet writer and activist. His first collection of poetry was *Outspeaks: A Rhapsody* (1997). A second collection, *Woodrat Flat*, was published in 2015, four years after his death. After a legendary road trip with Jack Kerouac and Lew Welch, they published a collection of haiku called *Trip Trap* (1972). After living many years in Humboldt County, he spent his final years in the village of Volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii.

Andrew Schelling, poet and translator, lives in the mountains of Colorado's Front Range at 8000 feet, on a ridge between Four Mile and Black Diamond creeks (which drain east into the Platte River). Eight books of poetry translated—Sanskrit and related tongues—old time poets. Con-

tention over land use at Bears Ears prompted regular excursions into arid canyons that cradle rock art, ruins, and pre-history. Twenty-odd books include *The Facts at Dog Tank Spring*, *Love and the Turning Seasons: India's Poetry of Spiritual & Erotic Longing*, and *Tracks Along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture*.

Cedar Sigo was raised on the Suquamish Reservation in the Pacific Northwest and studied at The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute. He is the author of eight books and pamphlets of poetry, including *Language Arts* (2014), *Stranger in Town* (2010), *Expensive Magic* (2008), two editions of *Selected Writings* (2002 and 2005) and most recently the Bagley Wright Lecture Series book *Guard the Mysteries* (2021). He has taught workshops at St. Mary's College, Naropa University and University Press Books. He is currently a mentor in the low residency MFA program at The Institute of American Indian Arts. He lives in Lofall, Washington.

Gary Snyder is the author of sixteen collections of poetry and prose. Since 1970 he has lived in the watershed of the South Yuba River in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1975 and a finalist for the National Book Award in 1992, he has been awarded the Bollingen Poetry Prize and the Robert Kirsch Lifetime Achievement Award. The definitive edition of his *Collected Poems* appeared in 2022 with The Library of America.

Chief Wedlidi Speck has cultural roots to the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuuchah-nulth, and Northern Vancouver Island Coast Salish peoples. He has taught Indigenous history, ways of knowing and relational practices and uses this wisdom and experience to mentor Indigenous leaders, family and youth in cultural traditions. Chief Speck spends much of his time building cultural bridges, developing cultural agility skills and mentoring leaders in inclusive leadership. Favorite methods applied are circle practices, storytelling and story harvest. Indigenous Identity, cultures, and rights (responsibilities) are priority focuses for Chief Speck. "Every

person needs to know where they come from, who they are, and where they are going.

Ann Spiers was the inaugural Poet Laureate and Poetry Post steward on Vashon Island in Washington State. Her poems cycles (*Rain Violent* (Empty Bowl), and *Back Cut* (Black Heron) were published in 2021 and *Harpoon* (Ravenna's Triplet Series) was published in 2022. [uv6]Her chapbooks are *What Rain Does* (Egress Studio), *Bunker Trail* (Finishing Line), *Long Climb into Grace* (FootHills' Poets on Peace Series), *The Herodotus Poems* (Brooding Heron), *Volcano Blue*, *Tide Turn*, and *A Wild Taste* (May Day). Once in aikido, her centering now depends on decades of tai chi and walking through the landscape/seascape.

George Stanley, born in San Francisco in 1934, became a third-generation American modernist poet. Then, after San Francisco was over, he travelled[uv7] north to Vancouver, to seek refuge among second-generation Canadian modernists. His books of poetry include *Vancouver: A Poem* (2008); *After Desire* (2013); *North of California St., Selected Poems 1975–1999* (2014); *West Broadway* (2018), and *Love Is Not an Algorithm* (2020).

Robert Sund (1929–2001) was an award-winning poet, painter, musician, calligrapher and an eloquent spokesman for his native Northwest landscape, a place he called the Ish River Country. He intended to be a doctor until his teacher Theodore Roethke encouraged him to focus on poetry. He published his first major work, *Bunch Grass*, to major acclaim in 1969. In 1984, his book, *Ish River*, won the Washington State Governor's Award for best new book of poetry. The definitive edition of his poems appeared in 2004 as *Poems from Ish River Country: Collected Poems & Translations*.

Richard Wagener has an undergraduate degree from the University of San Diego and a graduate degree from Art Center College of Design. He has been engraving wood for forty years and his work has been in many fine press editions, including collaborations with Peter Koch in Berkeley and the Book Club of California. In 2006 Richard established the imprint

Mixolydian Editions. He has collaborated with David Pascoe of Nawakum Press on three fine press books, one of which earned them the 2016 Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Book Design. He currently lives and works in northern California.

Philip Zenshin Whalen (October 20, 1923–June 26, 2002) was born in Portland, Oregon. During the 1950s he met Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and other figures of the San Francisco Renaissance. On October 6, 1955, he was a participant in the historical Six Gallery reading where he read with Kerouac, Ginsberg, Snyder, Philip Lamantia, and Michael McClure. His books include *On Bear's Head*, *Heavy Breathing*, *Canoeing Up Cabarga Creek*, and *Overtime*. Whalen's growing interest in Zen Buddhism matured during extended visits to Kyoto, Japan. He was ordained *unsui* (Zen Buddhist monk) in the Soto Zen lineage and was eventually installed as the Abbot of Hartford Street Zen Center in San Francisco.

Jason Tetsuzen Wirth is professor of philosophy at Seattle University and a Soto Zen priest. His recent books include *Nietzsche and Other Buddhas: Philosophy after Comparative Philosophy* (2019), *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis* (2017), and the co-edited volume (with Bret Davis and Brian Schroeder) *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* (2011). He is currently completing a manuscript on the cinema of Terrence Malick as well as a work of ecological philosophy called *Turtle Island Anarchy*.

Influenced by his continuing studies of poetry, painting, film, music, and the Japanese traditions of Zen, calligraphy, Ikebana, *karesansui*, bonsai, *ma*, *wabi-sabi*, and *mushin*, **Nathan Wirth**, a self-learned photographer, attempts—primarily through long exposure and infrared photography—to photograph silence. Anyone who is interested can see more of his work at: <https://sliceofsilence.com/photography/>.

But for the summer of '69 (SF Bay area), **Bill Yake** has lived in Cascadia—exploring its nooks and crannies from Haida Gwaii to the Trinity Alps,

from Glacier National Park to Cape Disappointment. This anthology hosts the pantheon of modern poets whose work he values most. His most recent collection, *Waymaking by Moonlight* (Empty Bowl Press), gathers poems from fifty years of attention to community and the wild. These poems have appeared widely in publications serving environmental and literary communities—including *Orion*, *Rattle*, *Cascadia Review*, *Poetry*, *ISLE*, *Wilderness Magazine*, *Terrain.org*, and NPR's *Krulwich Wonders*.

Jan Zwicky is the author of over twenty books of poetry and prose including *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth*, *The Long Walk*, and, most recently, *The Experience of Meaning*. Zwicky grew up in the northwest corner of the Great Plains on Treaty 6 territory, and currently lives in a coastal rainforest succession on Quadra Island, which is situated at the north end of the Strait of Georgia. It is unceded territory with a complex history including Coast Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw influences.

CASCADIAN zen

Cascadian Zen: Bioregional Writings on Cascadia Here and Now Volume I

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