Circle of Seasons

Fall 2021
Cover Art

Stay a While and Listen

Guthrie Straw

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she of many forms
—
Lauren MacDonald

and she
of many forms
came now
this time
as a cloud

full of herself

billowing

from one window to the next
My body is made of smoke.
Quietly fading in
Drifting among trees
Gathering in the hidden places
You do not see me
But I am here

My hair is made of prairie grasses
Shivered by the wind
Nourished by the deep soils
Pliable when young and tender
Upright and stiff with age
Sending out invisible roots
To bind us to the land.

My breath is the huff of deer
Scenting the air for danger
The tang of pine and sage
Scenting my dreams
In and out
Do you hear it?
We are still here.
Raking Leaves Yesterday
_ Nancy Christopherson

I enjoy the plastic swish
of tines on the wide red rake
as the leaves are obedient
bits of dry flake—except
in the wind when they flit—
and stay where I guide
them. The piles grow massive.
These black plastic bags
at my feet seem pretty small
by comparison but as
needed I stuff the leaf litter
in, grabbing up deer droppings,
dried up neighborhood critter
poops—why I wear gloves—
and for stickers—fill the
bags one by one then squish
the air out, tie them off.
Big beach balls on the lawn
as I toss them across the
space toward the garage
to pile in the back of the truck
for the dump on this
sunny, chilly Veteran’s Day
weekend. I think of
William Stafford and his
young wife out on the open road
in the middle of Montana
in the dark of night beneath
stars, their happiness at
the freedom of that,
remembering he said to
lower my standards
this morning to get the words
out, scatter them like mulch
from the leaves I raked
which makes me feel alright
I guess, fully protected
as the program says
on the laptop screen,
good to believe I think.
September Morning

Heidi Muller

Pull back the curtains
Cold fingers reaching for warmth
Hot cup of coffee

Plaintive small voices
Meow so desperately
Please don’t let us starve

Blue sky and sunshine
Autumn peeks in through the door
Who invited you?
Monsoon Season  
Moll McCarty

I.
When there is danger, you call
Your voice is a waterfall I stand under
Waiting is a practice I attack with overconfidence
As if my devotion to the act itself is enough to
bring you home

II.
A red velvet cake decomposes in the kitchen
I luxuriate amidst ashtrays and piles of books on a
brown floral couch stained with coffee
The air is warm and wet and stinks of booze
A fly lands on my collar bone and I brush at it
lazily

III.
There is a cognitive bias with too long of a name to
remember (Dunning-Kruger)
that indicates overconfidence when
arriving to a skillset as a novice
The novice, when waking up to their own incompetence
will feel
shocked, horrified, humiliated, aghast, embarrassed

IV.
The police officer asks where I am from and why I am
so naive
"Oregon must be a nice place, is it cold?"
I tell him my life is off the tracks of its own plan
He gives me lecture and he is mostly right
"Yes, sir" I say, embarrassed

V.
Monsoons drench the dirt, mosquitos feast
The scent of creosote is released by the rain
and rises soft and volatile like me
I rub calamine lotion into my ankles and
spray my legs with geranium
It has been hot.  
Dry, dusty, record breaking hot.

Not just once or twice.  
The whole month of July  
all around the region, breaking records hot.

This afternoon big clouds moved in  
and were persuaded to give up just a little moisture.  
After dark they really set in with a steady, soaking rain.

Eleven o’clock– the rain, no wind to push it around,  
falls straight to the pastures.  

The emergency siren starts to wail from town  
calling in the volunteers.

In bed, I listen to the heavy rain  
and the siren through open windows.  
The coyotes are in the dark pastures  
all responding with song.
Harvest
-
MidLo
holding you, pressing our skin together, i brought you into the deepest part of me.

i wanted you. from the top of your head, down your neck, to your shoulders, and towards the feet that held you. each wrinkle, dimple, and freckle pointing to the next.

and it almost worked. that me-becoming-you us creation. yielding fruit with a mouth that spoke, directionality and weight. indistinguishable from itself, we soared. i thought.

i remember you that way; a part of me.

now, i hold the dirt in my hands and wonder what it might take to build with this dry soil and rock. to be just a me, in my own body,

separate from.
Untitled

Luce Behnke
Barbed Wire (Belly Crawl)
- Margo Cilker

Capo 2 – Key of G (A)

INTRO:
Em G Em G Em G C

VERSE 1:
Em       G
There’s a barbed wire fence
Em       G
Down in the canyon
Em       G   C
Are we inside or outside the line?
Em       G
You step over it
Em       G
I go through it
Em       G   C
The kid belly crawls cause they’re five

CHORUS:
Em       G
If you knew what it was like to be
Em       G
On both sides of me
Em       D   C
I’m going farther this time
Em       D   C
I’m going farther this time
VERSE 2:
There's a farmer we know
Steps into the tavern
Where the bright lights ease the mind
The band gets an encore
The farmer a stiff pour
And we're all getting closer this time
Yeah we're all getting closer this time

Chorus
   Em     G
If you knew what it was like to be
Em     G
On both sides of me
Em     D     C
I'm going farther this time
Em     G
If you knew what it was like to have
Em     G
Both hands tied
Em     D     C
I'm going farther this time
Em     D     C
I'm going farther this time

G    D    C    x4

CHORUS

OUTRO
There's a barbed wire fence
Down in the canyon
Are we inside or outside the line?
Scientists
Kristy Athens

Editor’s note: After submitting to Circle of Seasons, Athen’s “Scientists” was stolen from Wallowa County’s local bookstore, The Bookloft. Perhaps it was because of its pro-science stance? As the artist put it in an email to the editor: “We live in a strange time!”
Hands (for Beth)
—
Kendrick Moholt

HANDS
(for beth)

Then,
one day
you wake up.
Your hands look very old.

You learn a friend's wife has died
after seven years of cancer.

Another friend's child is pregnant,
with her first child,
in her 30s.

You remember the first time
grandfather's hands
looked old.

And, you realize, he was about your age.
By the time I arrive, it is already feeling like fall —
still summer, but cold to my North Carolina-adjusted body,
shivers under sweaters in the evenings,
not able to jump into the lake as eagerly as my brother.

I gaze up wide at the jagged mountains,
contemplating how it feels like they’d be quicker to kill you,
but I like them better.
I never quite felt comfortable in the rolling old of the
Appalachians,
uneasy in their suffocating jungliness, so much more
difficult to catch a view.
I think often of something someone said to me once,
that we are direct products of the land we first knew.
Is that why I’m so fierce and I can’t dream small?

When I woke up in Wyoming on my drive over,
I went to the lakeshore to greet the West.
Suddenly, I was keening,
hurled over some edge of emotion
by the scent of juniper and the open air.
I rocked back and forth on the lakeside grit —
how could I,
HOW COULD I have stayed away from the place I love so much
for so long?
I had my reasons, and I know why,
but reacquainting myself, it’s almost as if
I am apologizing to the landscape,
apologizing to myself.

The last time I lived here, I stared out of car windows
unthinkingly,
unconcerned with road names or landmarks.
I didn’t know that one day I would wish I knew where it was
that we made the acapulco houses in the shadow-dappled sand
by the creek,
where it was, that one swimming hole
with the waterfall you could duck behind and stick your
face through,
where it was, that we went tubing somewhere up high on a
hill
in the golden grandeur of summer.
This time, I seek out the backroads, drive in all directions in search of what I know of this place and also, what I don’t.

One day I drive up Caudle Lane, and, \textit{whoosh}! That’s where that horse stepped on my foot for a whole two minutes before my riding instructor bolted over and yelled, “Why didn’t you say something?!” as she lifted the hoof up off of my foot. Where I made that detour that put a barbed wire fence through my forehead because I was sledding downhill and a car was driving up, and I was more scared to roll than to slice. Where I tubed down that irrigation ditch with a friend that one golden afternoon, fretting the whole time that the bees might sting.

That first summer, my mom takes me to Bear Creek and – \textit{voila!} – there it is, that swimming hole with the waterfall you can duck behind and poke your face through. But the second summer, for my birthday, my dad takes me driving out Harl Butte. We end up on a tiny dirt road through the forest out a ridge even he’s never seen before.

One evening in late fall, perhaps the day I drive out Caudle Lane, but maybe not, I drive out Leap Road from Lostine to Enterprise for the first time. I stop to take a walk and breathe in the cold, take in the patches of snow on the ground. I turn around. I don’t know why I’m so surprised, but I am, to see the mountains beyond the prairie, looming purple-blue, weaving in and out of stormy sunset clouds and light. My heart pounds. I’ve never been here before – at least not in my memory – but somehow it seems like the mountains were always there in my rearview mirror, tucked inside of me, ready for my return should I choose to turn around.
Woman
-
Ginger Berry

I thought I knew you, girl with long flowing hair down to her not yet existent hips, girl with giggles on her tongue and adventure in her eyes. An untouched soul, who had never felt weight on their heart, shock on her face, or hopeless for the world. Girl whose thoughts were swimming with innocence, not quite understanding what happiness felt like. Girl who was in love with life, but who’s smile hadn’t quite formed yet.

I know you now girl, I understand you. Girl with fully formed emotion, with hair cut, and bleached. Girl with curves, girl with love, and a little bit of life to accompany the adventure in her eyes. Her laughter bouncing off her teeth. She’s felt heavy hearted and shocked. She’s let people into her heart. The world is still hopeless at times, but girl, you strive to change it. She’s felt true happiness, what it’s like to feel full, full of sparks and stillness. Full of happiness. But you’re not a girl anymore. You’re a Woman.
October—the month of hot sun, cool air and shortened days. It’s also the month that middle-school lit teachers bring out “The Legend Of Sleepy Hollow.” I was a wimpy kid. I never liked horror stories (well maybe Poe), but the supposedly scary “Sleepy Hollow” just never gave me a fright. Maybe it was because Ichabod Crane was such a preposterous character. Maybe it was because he was wimpier than I was and made me feel brave, or maybe the headless horseman was just not creepy enough.

Over the years the story became a distant memory, but the name Ichabod remained intriguing. It’s a ridiculous name, an icky name, one with sharp edges, like the pointy elbows of Irving’s scrawny school master. These days it’s common to find kids with uncommon names—Aloysius, Esau, even Jedidiah, but I’ve yet to run across an Ichabod.

In the Old Testament Ichabod was the son Phineas, the son of Eli. The day he was born the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines, his father was slain in battle and hearing the news, his grandpa fell off a stool, breaking his neck. The shock of it all sent his mother into early labor and as she died in childbirth, she named the newborn, Ichabod, meaning, “the glory has departed.” It was a bad day—a bad day for Israel, a bad day for the Eli family and a rough start for the baby. His name only pops up once more in the Bible and then it concerns his brother Ahitub, and not Ichabod.

What on earth triggered this meditation on Ichabod? The summer of 2009 in Colorado was hands-down the most glorious summer of my six decades. Every day seemed to be filled with sparkling, azure skies that morphed into billowing thunderheads with hours of crackling lightning for our evening diversion. It was Goldilocks, never too hot and never too dry. Daily rains brought forth a feast of wild flowers and kept the water bill low. Then, the first week of October, ice and snow hit the Rockies with leaves still green on the branches. The usual blaze of color from carpet-bagging maples and native aspen never arrived. Frosted leaves wilted, passing straight to brown where they waited only for a gale to bring down the curtains on their embarrassing finale.

The glory had departed.
Milady Malady
—
Dustin Lyons

On the many flows and storms that brought us here...
    a dancing train
    of dying stars
Gone but ongoing, black and sheer...
    pert and relic
    as gypsy guitar—

Another romance
    Another comedy
    Another killing to unfold
Another spray of lover’s blood
    upon your fighter’s robe—

My Little Tiny...
Milady Malady

Mine are your cracked and wine-stained lips—

There’s a ringing bell
    a mangled spade
    an unbridled jade
In your eyes...
    a salted lash, a dusty road—

On a kiss
    in a casket of gowns
    with a latching sound
Your whetted fangs sliced the cord
and it quickly fell...

All that was silk...
and all that was love...

but a feast for the breathless moths of farewell—

My Gypsy Jaguar...
Milady Malady

Mine are your quaking face
and riverbed eyes—

From your Black Hair

to your neck

Down your back

to your waist

From your hips

to your thighs

Down your legs

to the tips...

Your body like the canyons, like the mountains, like the prairie—
My fingers like the rain, like the river, like the sea—

It was cottonwoods, it was sandstone, it was condors in flight—
It was keeping our stride on swollen tides—

It was Tricky, it was Malbec, it was jumping the gates—
It was past lives, future dreams, it was Xela, it was Fate—

It was reefer and Redwoods, Cocteau Twins in Claude Damn Van—
It was whiskey in the Minam, meadowlarks, and silver bands—
It was Ceildhs and Xavanadus, it was Mine Shafts and Iron Lungs—
It was duck skirts and ushankas, it was set-up and breakdown—

It was the North Fork of the Salmon: the patina of your eyes—
It was naked me, swimming you, a proposal and a smile—

It was clawfoot tubs and candles, it was your hot-rock touch—
Into my arms at Mountain Star, at Blood Moon Ranch—

It was cluck cluck...you know the rules...that spot there, yes! Yes! YES!—
It was tangled legs, curls in my mouth, a hand upon your breast—

It was drunken nights, shit said, it was stains upon the day—
It was Pad Thai and a movie, it was passion gone astray—

It was friends, it was neighbors, shattered trust, another lie—
It was one last, hot puddle of us...my head on your thigh—

It’s all ashes in a fire pit now, my Little Bird...
Milady Malady

Mine is that lost, waning woman
And that fair and waxing girl—

August 11, 2021
Blood Moon Ranch
Experience
The Redwing Blackbird
Atop the
Weedstick
Gently weaving in the wind
Singing it's bright song
Full volume
Utterly
Purely
Divine
and just like that

there’s no hiding
behind the sun
anymore

how do you feel?

i think i prefer it this way, myself—
summer’s so loud,
demands so
much

doesn’t listen
as much as she speaks
and i tire
so easily
of this

oh,
all the ways
to distract
a heart

we’d collect them all
if we could,
use them to stay afloat
in cold lakes,
collect them like
stickers
out of state

but I’d rather
put hot
liquid
to
lips

drown in clouds
of blanket
breath
after that smoke finally left

i’d rather
watch these trees
work so hard

to keep

and then so
easily

release
release
Upcoming winter zine submissions with title due by: December 9, 2021
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