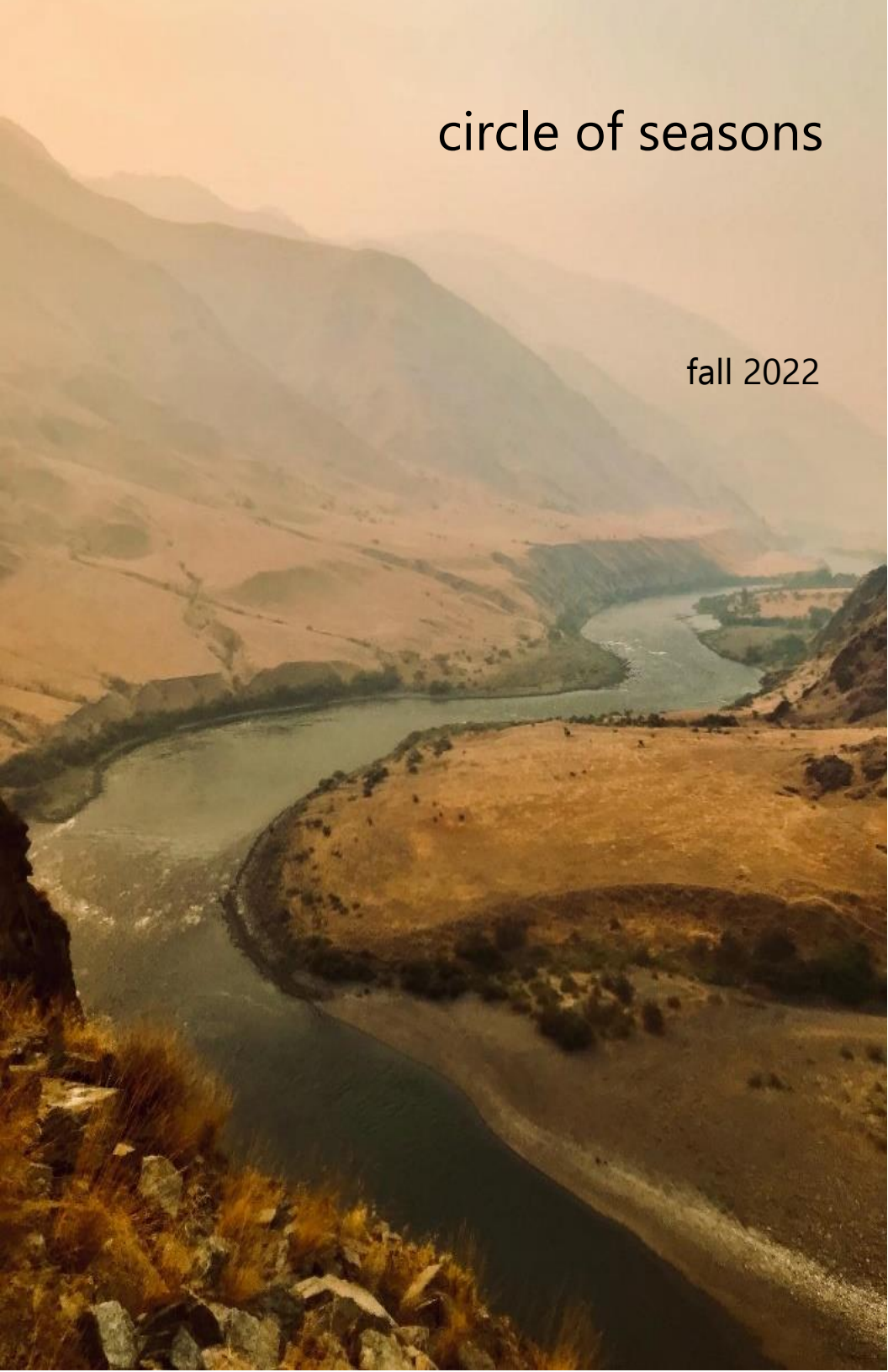


circle of seasons

fall 2022



Cover Art
-
Afterimage
-
Amanda Rauhauser

(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)

Someone I loved once gave me
a box full of darkness.

It took me years to understand
that this, too, was a gift.

-MARY OLIVER, "THE USES OF
SORROW"

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A letter to my future self about death

-

Moll McCarty

It is night and still hot. I fling open my door and fold myself into a lawn chair on my porch where I open my book and read

During meetings of the Vienna Circle, Ludwig Wittgenstein sometimes turned his chair to face the wall and read the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore aloud to a fidgeting circle of logicians

To death, Tagore writes:

"Day after day I have kept watch for thee; for thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life. All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love / have ever flowed towards thee..."

I also flow toward death

Time drags me, bullies me, rushes me

Moments whirl into the distance, frothing and churning as time whisks me further away

My yearning longs backward for
homes
experiences
beloveds

My beloveds fall like leaves from a tree

In the Chiricahua Mountains, fall is nearly undetectable

The monsoons rest

The sun returns to her relentless baking

I find a yellow leaf on an Ocotillo, bake squash on a 90-degree day

In Wittgenstein's only published review, he critiques the assumption that propositions exist only in subject-predicate form, for example

Subject: I, myself

Predicate: pine for moments lost to the past

I myself have no letter to write to death; I write instead to my future self, the subject I will become

The Cicadas continue their ecstatic night-song as I write

Dear subject, I have nothing to soften the certainty of your impending loss; I offer you only my trembling, unwilling submission to the propositional terms of your existence

Crow's November Dreams

-

Susan Woods Morse

First light, pale red sun,
crow blinks eyes,
hopes for late cocoons.

Crow huddles under morning
sun, dreads the coming
bite of fall.

Crow perches on lines
streaked silver with frost
and humming voices.

Remains of weeds peek
through quilt of snow,
crow's shadow outlined.

Ice freezes webs decked
from weed to weed; crow
gathers diamonds to his breast.

Early snow at dusk feathers
crow with white patchwork
patterns on black fluff.

Fringe of blackened sky
as crow flies home before
the last fall of sun.

A flurry of wind rustles
crow's feathers tonight
under the gray clouds.

The full moon glistens;
nestled in his dreams,
crow's talons hoard treasure.

Cold pebble of moon reflects
in crow's eye; wind races and
wrestles brown leaves.

Each animal waits for dawn;
crow, the one sharp silhouette
in a crow black night.

Shallower Water Grant Creek

-

Nancy Christopherson

Pebbles and stones speckled
as eggs in the creek bottom where
it chuckles and sings to itself

as it flows. You can walk across
maybe up to your ankles and the sun
shivers between tree limbs.

Twigs gather together across a miniature
impoundment—natural—and the silvery
fluid spills over swiftly enough for some

laughter and shushing. A quiet place
for ambling, maybe to step
down the embankment, stand by

the edge to watch for a while.
Your thoughts will relax maybe roam.
Yellow coins from the aspen float,

yet-green leaves from that big
cottonwood over there and the storm
yesterday. What this means is perhaps

difficult to tally but daily practice
is cleansing— it does calm you.
The water flows. That it

still flows, is still clean enough to cup
into your hands, and there are
mossy boulders in places.

Ode to a Tear-Stained Guitar

-

Emily Aumann

Some days when I pick you up
the rumbles that sound
through your belly and mine
illuminate our power,
power and beauty that we are
just by being alive.

Sometimes I hold you at night
and ask your vibrations
to harness waves crashing inside,
transform them into calm waters
that more clearly reflect the stars.

And some days, I reach for you
and we dance, open a faucet
for heartache and remembrance
like cold honey warm enough to flow,
for pain wrapped in messy thanks
to stream down cheeks:
drip, drip on your resonant body
one salty tear at a time.

As spirit swells under skin,
poems ride the wings of my voice,
resound through body and mind,
offer solace like salve to the heart.

How alive you ring,
fan the flame of being,
and carry me, like a river out to sea.

Demeter in Late Summer

-

Kortney Garrison

At the water's edge, I wear a path made in your light.

After you leave, my feet will find the way.
Water and hills will ripple and reflect,

mirror each other
like we used to do.

I'll call it Lost Lake, Mirror of My Longing,
What Remains When You are Gone.

I am learning to endure your absence.

But in the Bodega

-

Kortney Garrison

Where we walked after the rain let up,
a woman gathered groceries with a baby on her shoulder.

A baby brand new, only weeks old,
still awake. His toes, bare and hearty.

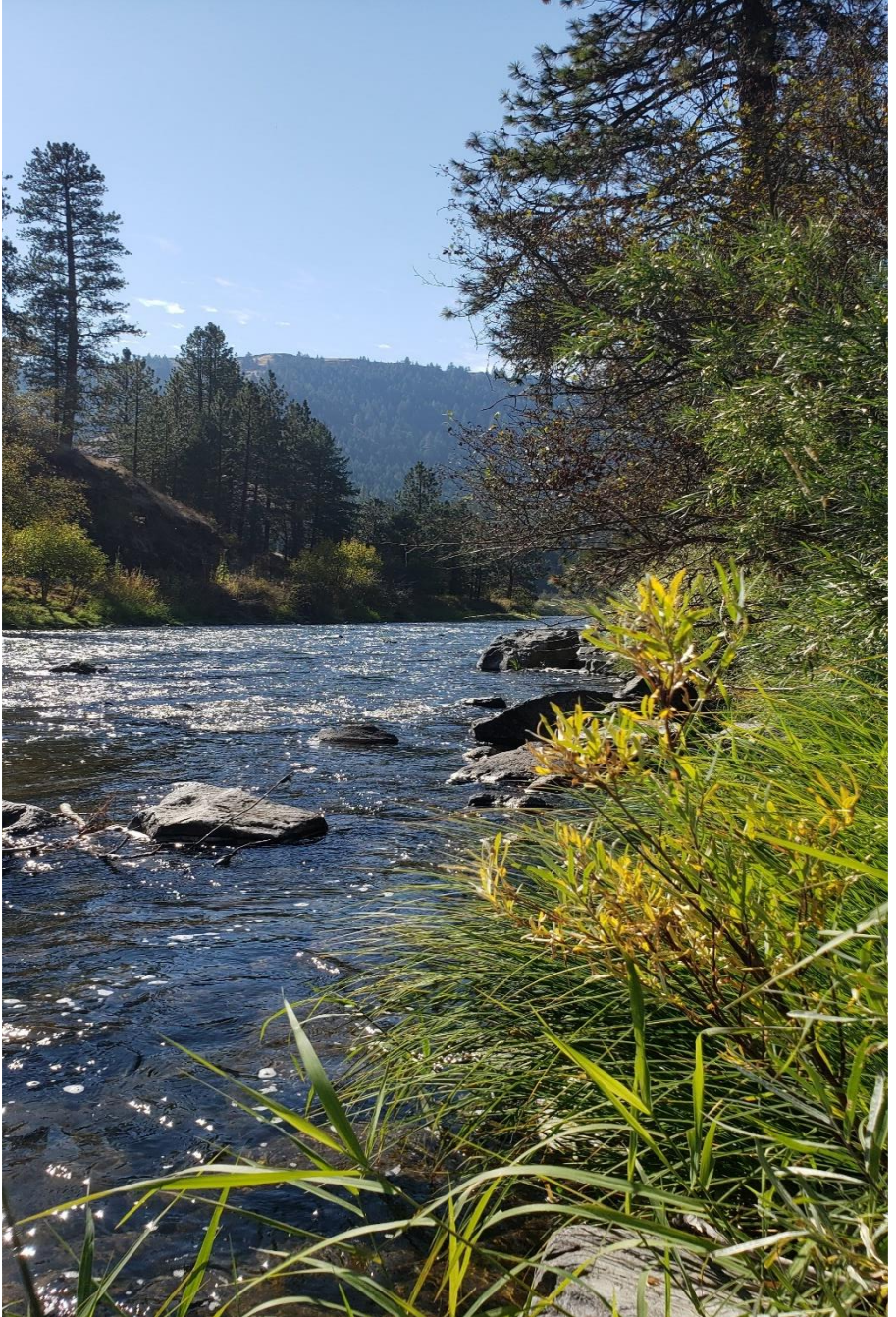
We stood in front of the freezer case.
He looked at me as if to say, Yes,

we two are devoted
to the persistent god of our hunger.

Then his mother shifted her awkward packages,
balanced the baby again, and they were off,

through the swinging doors into the great, gray world.

Shimmer
-
Janis Carper



Used Furniture

-

Janis Carper

So, you drive along the curves
of the shimmering river
dotted with fly fishers
to the next county to
purchase a used coffee table
you found on the online classifieds.

With gas at five dollars a gallon
you are betting
on the negotiability of this exchange.

The midday shopping errand
is inconveniently timed
but ends up worth it.
It probably needs re-finishing she says
My son built it in high school
You ask if he knows she's selling it.
Yeah, he has a little baby now
and says the corners are too sharp.

After closing the deal
you don't rush home
but wander and ramble through the
hills and canyons of umber, ochre and olive
under a cerulean sky.
Roadside apples, too-high elderberries
This early fall day is a jewel to savor.

Stop by the river
scramble down to a sunny rock
splash your face with the frigid water.

May that child
always know
her father's love.

A SAD Poem

-

Rachel Barton

Take your red sweater
with most of the buttons intact
but for the cracked one done-in
by the stainless barrel of the dryer.

Slide the sleeves to three-quarter length
Settle the hem just below the waist
Tuck your shirt collar over the ribbed
neckline to forestall an itch

Now you are ready
The calendar has turned to fall
Pre-winter light glances side-ways
across the counter

and folds for the night before
you can walk the dog--
Walk in the dark
The dog won't care

Come morning wake early in dim light
which will be darkness
before the month is over
Tell your body to get used to it

Walk the dog again
your sweater buttoned now
against the chill
You can wear red

as many days as you like--
whatever it takes
to keep your heart pumping
your mind engaged

Wallowa Thunderstorm

-

Richard Meadows

Snowing cottonwood.
Warm breath of dust
blows in from the valley
over Wallowa River.

Lightning strikes between
V of mountains.

Cottonwood leaves
extend their tongues
to sky
waiting to drink.

Petrichor anticipation
infiltrates.

Crackle and spark
fills the air.

Rain sweeps in
falling its drape
through the trees.

Mingling with
fallen snow of cottonwood.

So, It Will Be

-

Rhonda Struth

I'm told
by bird song, one can rise above misery,
to beyond the trees. So,
belly on back, with tight fistled grip,
I ride Eagle,
resonating with fear,
at the fall I took,
once upon a time.

Then, I trusted Raven,
and learned how
many ways I could crack,
how fragile I am.
Thought myself so strong, charging into darkness.

Mustn't shatter again.
No way I'll make it back. So,
I don't trust Eagle, either.
Though, I want to.

Blessing for an Anxious Planet

-

Alia Ayer

There have been summer days that did not feel light,
there have been sunny days where dark things happen -
when we have lost people, pets, and patience to the
sunlight,
there have been dark days that could have been light days
except something in our minds kept the curtains pulled
down
like a stubborn fog that will leave when it's ready,
there have been fall days where the sun never came out
because smoke filled the space where the light comes in.
On this autumn equinox,
when one season exits and another enters,
as summer brings a residual heat to this annual meeting,
and fall, an early darkness,
the seasons turn whether we are there to greet them or
not,
and, for a moment, at this intersection of light and dark,
we revel in what both can provide- perspective.

Landlocked in Fall Fog

-

Tricia Knoll

A broken lock on a fogged-in fence out back
 where wild turkeys do their leg-up dance

I can no longer see the path
 to where two men practice

in camouflage, tall socks and orange hats
to shoot arrows into a polyfoam deer

ear buds plugged to soft rock fog fantasies
soaked in sweat of lite beers

nowhere! whispers of waves or sea gulls
some susurrus of leaves this landlocked heart

that rocked in dream arms of a young man
wanting nothing more than a friend to hold

what this fog beguiles and hides
my ancient huntress on a prowl in burlesque

wisps and strands gauzy and bold
smoky as sashay and leafy striptease

Untitled

-

Alan Koch

Eaglets watch from snag

fawns prancing with the poets -

summer's renewal.

Summers end
-
Dustin Lyons

There's a chill in the air

The sweat on my neck

The blood in my veins

that reminds...

Death is a quenchless hunter

who keeps her promise.

There is no hope for passion, though

without that chase...

Hearts will fail

as sure as words

as sure as their undying reach

for one another-

Pearly, everlasting...

I could never hope to forget

...that schoolyard scar upon your woman's thigh

How arrowleaf and beardtongue

pierced your freckled flesh

with shadow-

Understood subatomically

nothing ever really touches

It's the build up to and the let down from

that experience

that finds the fret and pulls the bow

that sets the heart to falling..

ripe as Autumn apple-

Wolf Moon Ranch 2022

One thing

-

M.M. Lau

I love about you
Even though it's tragic
Is that we've both been through gut-wrenching loss
We've both had it all
Ripped out from under us
Hard scabble from the bottom of the well
Groping in the dark for shards of dignity
Fragments of joy in misery
And like a couple of shit-eating pirates we clambered
out of that abyss
And stumbled haphazardly into the light

We've grinned at the bad
Laughed at the horror show
There's not a lot that surprises us anymore
Or a lot that can access that tender space Inside

Someone told me recently
After a misunderstanding
"What you did was unforgivable"
And we had a good laugh over that

We know how it feels to be dealt a hand that no one
could stomach
We know the taste of bitter defeat
The crushing blow of what it means
To Lose It All
How well we know the feeling of laying deep in the
gutter with just a glimpse of a star
Oscar Wilde had no idea

But you still find joy
In the way our dogs poke around in the reeds
Soggy and stinking and galumphing through the gravel
dust
Triumphant and returning to us again and again

You find joy in hot water
Anywhere
Sighing and exhaling with pure bliss as it cascades
around you

So unadulterated it always makes me laugh

I find joy looking at you
Knowing we made our way through the darkest forest
Making every mistake
Falling over and over and over and over
Hoping the next time up will be the time we run

I see you and we exchange that knowing smile
We've seen the worst
Now we demand our turn
To have the best

A Morning Walk Just Before Rain

-

Doug Stone

The grey October air swirls damp and cool,
cleansing away my last thoughts of summer.
This will be a day without shadows. The sun
has left for California. Maples are splotched
with yellow, oaks crisp, the color of rust.
There will be no flamboyant show of leaves.
The Northwest never gives up her green.
The mountains and valleys already swell
with shades of their lush winter verdancy.
Here, autumn does not feel like an ending.
I hear that great door on the Pacific open,
welcoming our season of rain and renewal.

The Detective
-
Angela Mart

A hunter's guide
Is in his own mind
Determining where his target lies
Unraveling the truth
Like a modern-day sleuth
Using clues he has earned
From generations before him learned
Leading him to the location
Where what he seeks hides

Triptych

-

Amanda Rauhauser

A gnarled, leafless tangle of branches stands alone, partway up a rocky slope in Hells Canyon. The Snake River's curl unfurls below in the V of the tree's twin trunks. Golden September grass glows. The tree's upper branches climb along the same angle as the distant canyon walls, opening like unfolded hands. Smoke-shrouded mountains, smooth trunk, polished river rocks, muted, and smooth. This lonely tree scratches at the white sky, defiant. Wind and weather have worn away its bark, so it shines silver for a second before the burnt, blood orange sun slips below the western ridge. Almost-autumn colors are hastened along by wildfire, not by the shift to cooler weather. A bleached horse skull hangs from the tree's highest branch, keeping watch. Marking our place.

In December, 2021, a winter wildfire ripped through Superior, Colorado, near where I grew up. My oldest friend used to live there, up above and east of Boulder. I remember Saturday sleepovers, strawberry toaster strudels, her three younger siblings making us feel like queens of the hill. Although her parents live in California now, she with her fiancé one town over, her siblings scattered from coast to coast, they had all just been together at the house for Christmas. Five days later, news footage of the fire showed their street on tv, and she recognized the absence right away, like an afterimage burned on the inside of your eyelids. All that was left of their house was the blackened foundation, the unmoored ghosts of a home swirling up from the ground with the smoke. The only whole thing they could find in the rubble and ash, she told me, was a marble chess piece. No childhood photo albums, no keepsakes. Six histories: of a mother,

a father, two daughters, two sons, reduced to a footprint of black soot.

Lightning sparked a fire near Imnaha a couple days before we started downstream on the Snake. Over the five glorious days we spent rafting through the Nez Perce homeland, writing, soaking in this exceptional place, the fire grew from 5,000 to 130,000 acres. Ash and black pine needles drifted onto our camps, onto the pages of my notebook, leaving black smears. The last morning, we woke to orange flames on a ridge two miles away, and by the time we returned upriver, retracing our steps, they had reached the riverbank. The Double Creek fire is now 157,332 acres, the largest in Oregon. From home, I refreshed InciWeb every day, zooming in to find the places I got to know in this wild canyon: Granite Rapids, Bernard Creek, Waterspout, Rush Creek, Temperance Creek, Hominy Creek, Suicide Point, Kirkwood. I kept checking the expanding red shape of the fire map, reading these place names again and again like some kind of fire season prayer, wondering. After a burn, the soil becomes fertile again, fragile green shoots bursting up through the black. A lost home doesn't have the power to regrow on its own. But maybe, like the simple, stately, marble queen, like the wizened tree, maybe being seen and remembered by someone who loves you is a start.

Acceptance

-

Nancy Christopherson

To make a little wind-up airplane buy the kit.
It used to be around twenty-five cents. Place

the plastic propeller on one end of the balsa
frame with the clip. Fit in the wings; the tail

assembly slips into the slots; add the rubber band.
It hooks into both ends, do you see? There.

Now wind it up by turning the prop clockwise.
The rubber will twist at first then double over itself

in knots like fists. You can treble them if you want.
The band is not laughing at you, it is preparing

for lift off, that big stage where you aim and let go.
Watch it climb and then stall; it will crash. Don't

worry, the springy little red wheels will catch
it. The frame is light as a kite. Set, let it go!

Upcoming winter zine submissions
with title due by: Jan. 15, 2023
wccircleofseasons@gmail.com

