

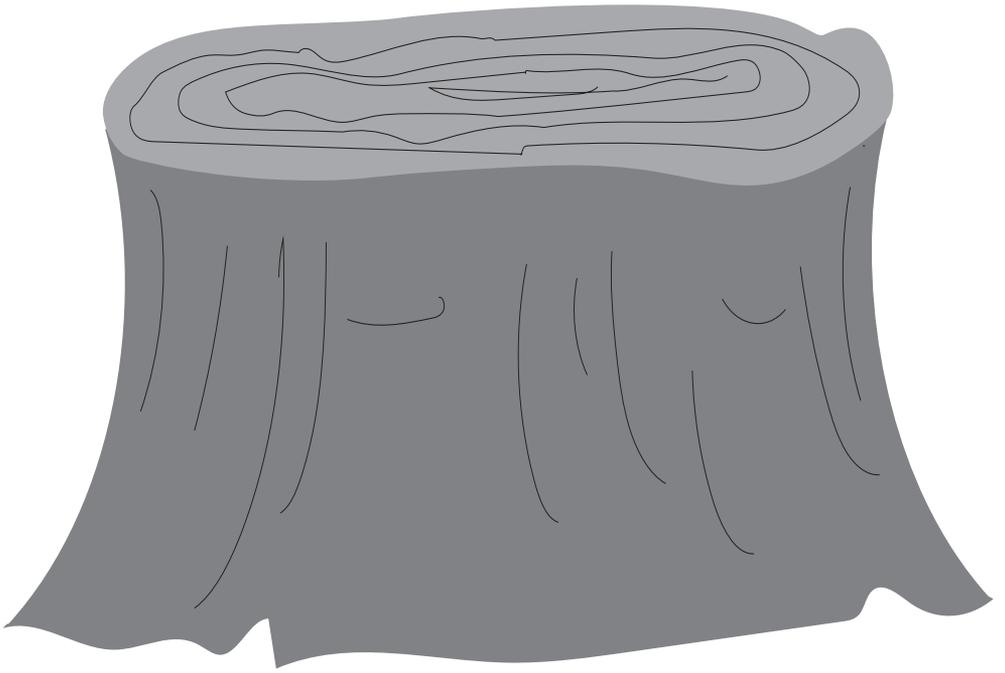


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More Poets of Washington  
*A limited-edition chapbook  
series expanding WA129*

**129+**



129+: More Poets of Washington (2)

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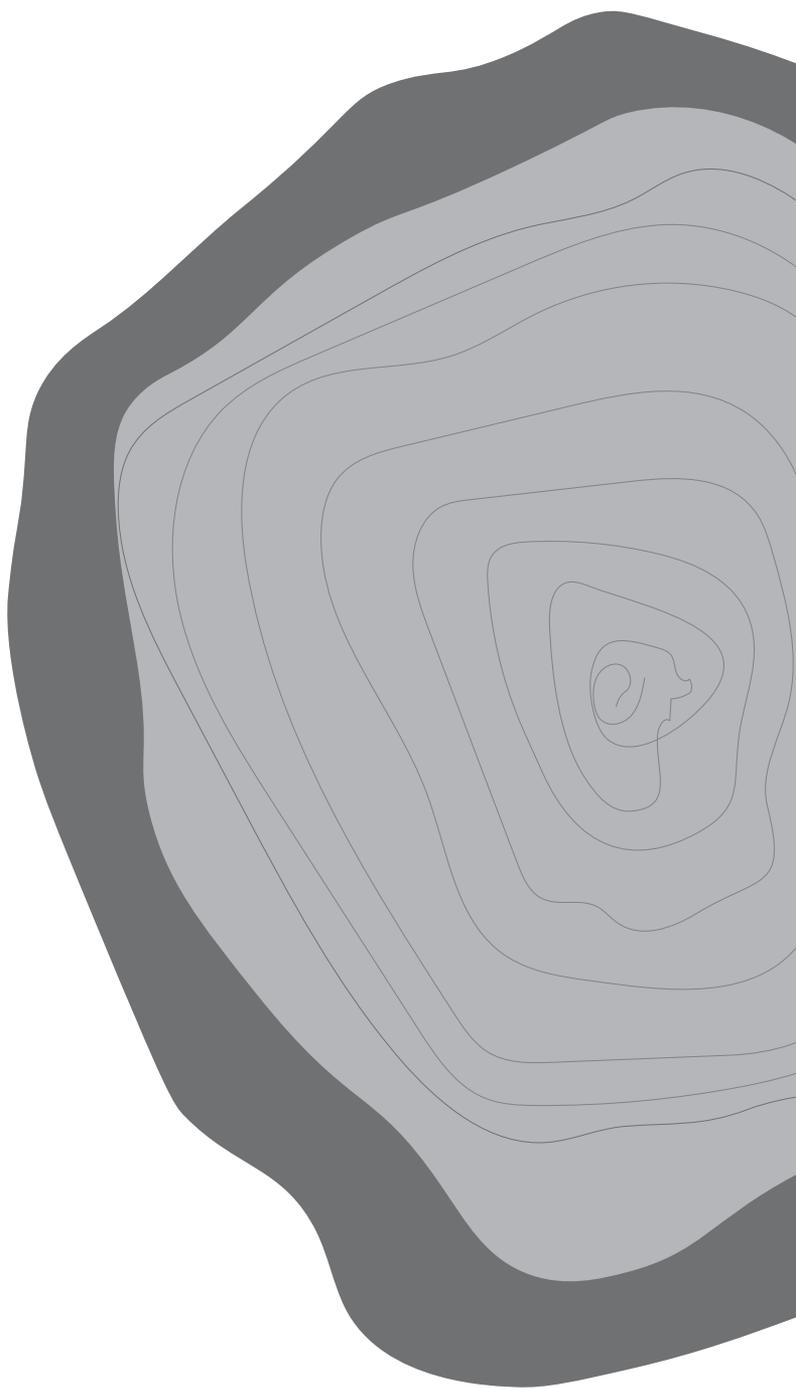
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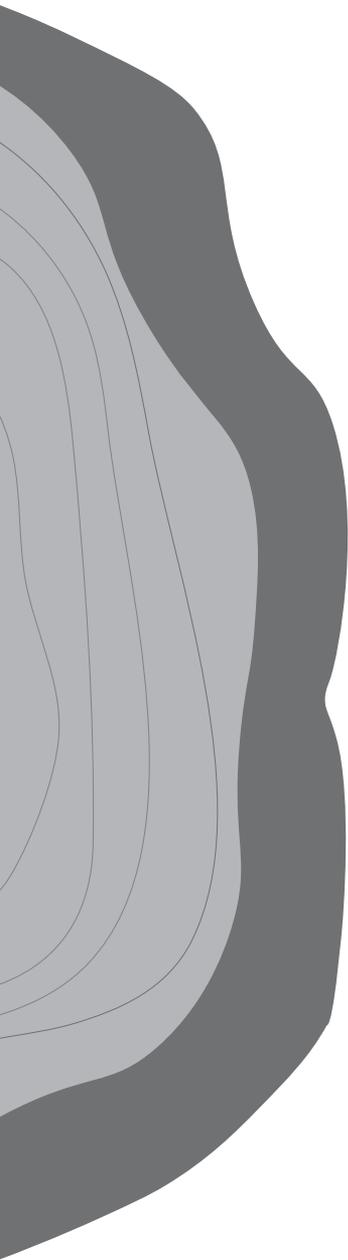
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# A Hike in the Quinault Rain Forest

Monda (Sherick) Van Hollebeke

Closer to me than she appears, I watch my oldest daughter  
through shadowy branches. Her light steps  
break barely any twigs.

She's looking for a new landscape.  
She hurries through all this beauty  
wondering what ferns lie ahead

while above, the mountains like hunched bears  
form a watch around her.  
Her eyes contain the sky.

Her sister tells stories  
about every green thing she sees.  
The forest listens.

She walks slowly, calling each tree by name,  
touches the maidenhair gently.  
Raindrops make huckleberries gleam.

Near rushing water she picks up stones.  
Wet air falls like a curtain.  
She points *I want to go that way*. We follow.

The third one moves to the rhythms of her sisters.  
Longing to sing in this tall forest  
she knows to be quiet in a church with its own choir.

A fern feather dangles from her dark hair.  
Her long legs lead me.  
She slows to make it seem

I am keeping up with them.  
Like the trumpet of the foxglove  
she holds who she is within.

# Olympic Mountain Scenes

Judith Duncan

## 1. Blue Grouse

he struts with fanned feathers  
puffy yellow air sacs  
cries *wump, wump*  
seeking compliant gray female  
to share ground nest  
nurture four eggs

## 2. American Dipper

below an overhanging rock  
behind water ripples  
on soft green moss  
sits a conical nest  
a family of six  
brown-feathered dippers

## 3. Mountain Marmot

white-whiskered  
elder of the colony  
fat, sleek, glossy  
brown whistling outlaw  
rough-pawed marmot  
nibbles bluebells

# Old Growth Forest, Oysterville

*Jennifer Pratt Walter*

Tall mud sucks the roaming tide into  
Willapa Bay where cedar shake-sided Victorians  
hunch among second-growth fir  
and the stumps of their great grandmothers.

One hundred fifty years ago men  
rocked the long saws until  
groan and shout and crash, another giant cedar,  
an ancient hemlock, another proud Sitka spruce,  
growth rings untallied, cut to the ground,  
next stop the hungering sawmill.

Their tree voices still creak through  
crystallized pitch if you listen like a shy bird,  
holding the steep true grains together  
within their wooden souls.

Rain encumbers people and houses alike;  
my bare hair is a stream under the everywhere sky,  
Bayside, sawgrass bends its will to its windy gods,  
while heaps of oyster shells speak their stale muddy brine.  
Moss stitches wide across the forest floor,  
and man still thinks he owns it all  
as he struts tall through a severed forest.

# Crossing the Hood Canal Bridge

*Lindsay Rutherford*

Her voice floats from the backseat.  
“Daddy, I think I memorized the whole song.  
Want to hear it?” He smiles,  
left hand resting on the steering wheel  
as we speed across the Hood Canal Bridge.

She starts softly, muffled  
by sudden self-consciousness.  
When she stumbles, he jumps in  
as if he’s just been waiting  
for his chance. His voice lifts her up,  
swings her to his shoulders.

The song spills from her lips. Her notes  
rise and bob around us,  
rushing and bumping  
as though she just can’t wait!  
for the next verse. He takes his time,  
lets each note linger.  
Their voices swirl and mix and merge  
and their harmony disarms me.

I breathe in their music,  
sun on my skin,  
the glittering water  
and hyacinth sky,  
the three-year-old’s percussion line  
of lip-fluttering snores,  
I breathe it all in.

As we race across the bridge  
at sixty miles an hour, I close my eyes  
and let their music fill me up.

# Point Defiance

*Brian Desmond*

Because it's today and the tide is out,  
he walks all the way to the point.

Past small walls of gray clay, inscribed  
with the ready sentiments of youth.

Hearts, initials, and names,  
fading before the forevers.

Now branches of trees, pulled down  
by the sand, form an odd and almost

impossible forest. He debates  
the merits of forging ahead,

then forges ahead. Deer and raccoon  
tracks guide the way through.

On the other side, a shimmering  
landscape of rivulets and shells.

Then a moss-covered tree, whose gentle  
incline invites him to rest.

Seagulls call, but the mussels  
are quiet. In the morning fog,

he hears an engine stop. A fisherman  
whispers, "This is the spot."

Nothing but silence.  
Nothing at all.

He misses his son, picks up a shell,  
carves "Dad" in the clay at this feet.

He watches the water wash over  
the word. He watches the water

wash over the word. He watches  
the water wash over the word.

The way back  
is always different.

The light has changed,  
and the blue-green tide

reflects the mixed emotions of return.  
A dolphin rises and falls.

He stops to look at the cliff.  
Not long ago, someone scaled

the danger to leave behind  
a reminder: Carpe Diem.

He turns from the words  
and resumes the journey home.

A blue heron pauses,  
lifts, flies heavily away.

The mountain is out  
and more visible now.

The sound of the sound  
is small waves, lapping.

Rebecca Ebey  
*Lois Parker Edstrom*

*1822 – 1853, Whidbey Island*

Her house stood against the evergreens  
at the edge of the prairie where farmland  
partners with the sea.

It is as if she drifts in the fog that pockets  
the fields of the land claim; her loneliness a sigh  
in the wind that sweeps across Perego's Bluff

where she walked, scanning the horizon  
for incoming vessels: the bright sails,  
the returning tide a certain comfort.

Mother of two small boys, Mr. Ebey often  
away on territorial business, she longed  
for family left behind in Missouri;

illness and isolation her constant companions.  
On a clear day her gaze rose to the snow mountains:  
Mt. Baker, Mt. Rainier, and the Olympics,

those silent peaks that somehow steadied her.  
Less than two years after she stepped  
onto the island where all around seems

beautifully adorned in quiet serenity,  
four months after the birth of a daughter,

she closed her eyes for the last time,  
her funeral the first among the settlers  
who came ashore aspiring to new beginnings.

Alone in a garden shadowed with grief  
Mr. Ebey found a tendril of comfort  
in the appearance of a dove that lingered

near him and memories folded back  
upon themselves, two lives pleated together  
when hope was young.

# Not For Long, but Long Enough

*John Baker (his daughter)*

How long is the ocean?  
How deep is the sea?  
What will be the final price,  
To bring the ocean to me?

Polar sand crawls inside  
Of every crack and crevasse.  
Although rare, when the sun shines  
It looks a little bit like heaven.

The ocean is a forbidden beauty,  
Who dares me to come nearer  
She says, "One more step. It'll be fine."  
I'm thrown at the sand, my lungs are robbed,  
And my heart is filled with fear.

The shore line, gray and brown, is slipping from my sight.  
My fingers build trenches in the sand.  
I watch them all scream out my name,  
As I lose my grip on dry land.

Panic in his eyes causes the waves to hesitate  
Not for long, but long enough,  
His little girl to save.

Warm strong arms jerk me from the pull,  
So devastating and strong.  
Wet salty clothes replaced with flannel  
Make me feel so far from wrong.

The waves that once threatened me  
Are now my best friend  
To this day I am not afraid  
Salty water heals my fraying ends.

A place so beautiful, salty, and in motion  
A place we play in the face of death,  
The sea, the drink, the ocean.

# The Hoh Rain Forest Trail Circles

*Neile Graham*

Moss living on light & air.  
A chipmunk gobbling a cone  
dark & rich as mud. His beady,  
wary eye. The birds whose calls  
no one can

whistle or sing. What's left of trees.  
The absences under roots  
of the trees that nursed on them,  
that now, huge themselves,  
root partly

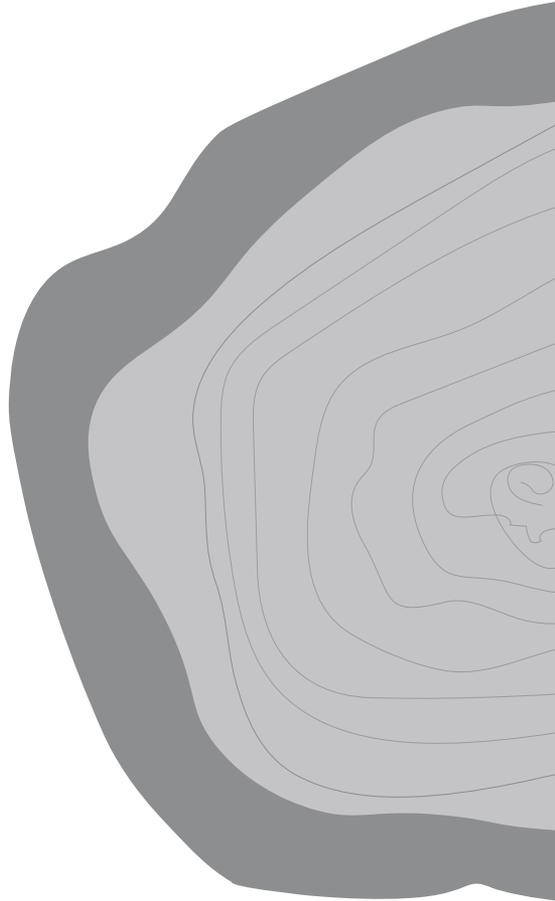
on wind & irresistible  
explore-able emptiness,  
tons of tree rising above your head,  
nervous dryad. The saplings  
beside.

Half-born trees. Young thin  
trees, old ones thickening hundreds  
of feet, the branches spreading  
gauzy wings to feed on particles  
& waves.

The small white moth dotting  
the air. The rich air. Glorious air.  
How it feeds the flying things.  
The resting things. The growing  
dying hidden

holy things. Gods small as moths  
& bigger around than all these  
monstrous-ly beautiful trees. And  
inside the improbable wood nymphs'  
astonishing

song you find yourself inside the wood  
inside each small & wary eye inside  
the point of light dotting through  
branches inside the one square inch  
of forest silence.



# Summer in Bellingham

*Harvey Schwartz*

Driving rain  
drops us off  
with a thud,  
into sunshine.

Yet dark shadows  
foretell what  
awaits us in fall.

We pretend  
we're not  
refugees,  
disturbed by  
sudden brightness.

Know...  
rain defines  
the Northwest.

What we don't see  
is not far away.

And we hate to admit  
the relief that we feel  
when we give up  
our transient ways

and come home  
to the welcoming  
arms of wet.

before the wind  
*Katherine Charters*

*The deep sea is the largest museum on earth.*

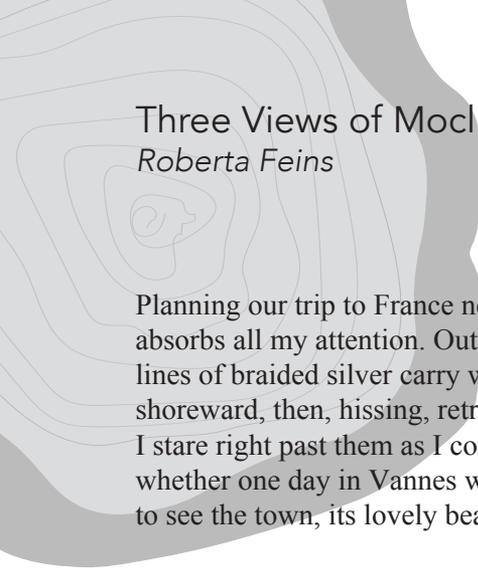
Robert Ballard

this no longer makes me  
heart-wrenchingly sad - I will lose  
all the tides have taught me  
in this wide wakeful mourning  
for the bay is gunmetal and that  
metallic coin taste spoils the tongue.

be who you are and the thrum will follow,  
so let me be a sloop neglected  
at this seagull-shit dock, the poverty  
of this love drags me through living  
in different, you tack and I jibe

before the wind all the gulls lifting  
together in a land-wave, it's a glance  
into my soul and the knowledge  
it can go no further –

develop into nothing more, please, than a  
spill in the grass, watering this madrone  
with laudanum. Blackberries have  
their sweetness sometimes, but these,  
with you, taste the edge of betrayal.



## Three Views of Moclips

*Roberta Feins*

Planning our trip to France next summer  
absorbs all my attention. Outside the cabin,  
lines of braided silver carry white foam  
shoreward, then, hissing, retract their gift.  
I stare right past them as I consider  
whether one day in Vannes will be enough  
to see the town, its lovely beach.

~

Gray late winter dusk, we stop  
at a small grocery just behind the dunes.  
Three unshaved middle-aged men  
straddle flimsy dinette chairs,  
watch NBA action. Hot dogs  
turn in metallic purgatory.

After the teenage Vietnamese clerk rings  
our lettuce, paper towels, one of the men  
lurches outside with us to his blue,  
silver four-wheel drive late-model  
Toyota with fancy camper-top.

~

Beach trash preaches an equality  
more convincing than any sermon. Open  
bud of tampon, bleached madrona  
roots twined with polypro rope.

Tangled tresses of kelp fronds stream  
along the sand from their holdfasts torn loose.  
Each cyclopean bladder's a breast thick  
with air and brine, sticky with algal honey.

The reddish stripes sea-carved  
along the ends of massive cedar logs  
give way to the palette of bonfire:  
soot and ash.

# Abel

*Tanner Abernathy*

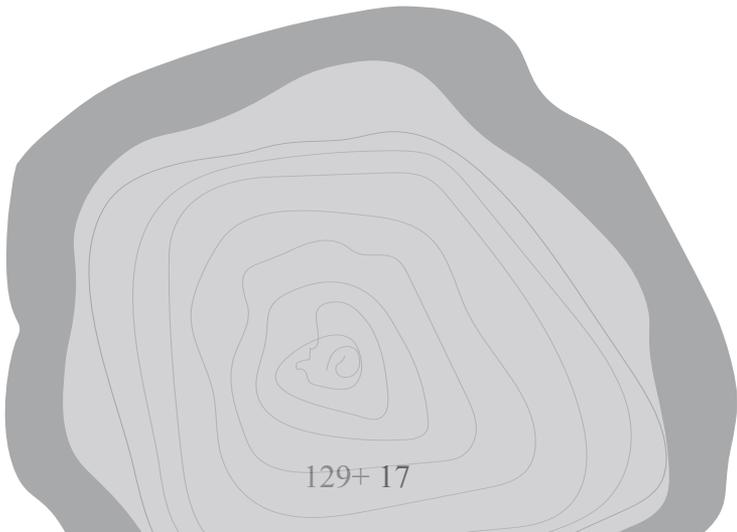
I found the boy deep deep I found the boy  
Under the earth deep deep under the mud  
Begin to raise the deep we found the boy

Swollen skin white heavy as death, the boy  
Wash him off, off dirt, off worms, off black blood  
I found the boy deep deep I found the boy

His parents moved away, grieving that boy  
Still I searched. Deep I dug deep in the mud  
Begin to raise the deep we found the boy

A field of corn, awful far from home boy  
the plow skipped the plot, the stalks drank the blood  
I found the boy deep deep I found the boy

The corn grew red, crows tasted the boy  
What had been done, his blood cries from the mud  
I found the boy deep deep I found the boy  
Begin to raise the deep we found the boy



In which my brother goes  
to her grave and I shed a tear  
*Risa Denenberg*

my brother goes to the grave  
site and says farewell  
to the engraving on the rock

I live far away and today  
the buttress crumbles, and I miss my mother  
for the first time

I don't know why he does it  
knowing and not knowing him so well  
is all I have to go on

debt, veneration, relief, it's all  
so mixed, right? maybe in his melancholy  
he hoards the image of a family

and I feel misplaced today, weepy  
as if disowned, shorn from that photo  
not like me at all, the cold unfeeling

bitch of me, knowing and not knowing  
myself so well, with no urge to go on  
after so many years

# To Find Myself at Home

Pat West

*The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest.*

John Muir

Trekking through Point Defiance Park,  
trees surround me. Fascinating  
the way they live in forests and groves  
in tribes and families.

Staggering to think of their roots  
entwined with soil for hundreds of years  
branches tongues carrying  
more secrets than they can bear.

When standing alone, they're like lonely persons  
who struggle against elements  
all their lives, suffering sickness and storms.  
Those ones open a scar on my skin  
where loss uprooted my life.

I see myself slumped in my recliner, eyes fixed  
on the miserable eternity of another day.  
For months, I blamed my husband's doctors, nurses,  
the hospital. I liked being mad. It gave me something  
to rub against.

My neighbor, a cross between a gangster  
and a wizard, strong armed me out of the house  
into the face-slapping rain to this park.  
At first all the trees made me damn near claustrophobic.  
For a long time, I tramped uphill and downhill  
trying to find the trail that would bring him back.  
I made every deal with the universe I could think of,  
ranting out loud. Once I heard a hiker say, Well, you see all kinds.

One day after a storm, I found myself  
under a citadel of Douglas firs  
and Red cedars, sunlight filtering through  
a single hole in the sky, I held my stiff arms above my head  
as if in surrender. Since then I let this place soften the wolf inside

with a particular alchemy of air and soil,  
the pungent smell of musky mildew laced with pine.  
I inhale long and deep,  
the way roots reach for the next inch of earth.

# The Prayer

Sarah Zale

*He said nothing when his mother opened him wide  
To dry in the sun. He was full of the sun.  
All day he dried on sticks, staring upriver.*

“Salmon Boy,” David Wagoner

The salmon is at 4 o'clock, the leaves of raw spinach  
with tomato and a slice of avocado at high noon,  
steamed chard at 8, he says as if I'm blind. Earlier

with my feet propped up, a book on my lap, I watched him  
wash the greens as if caressing a hand, his eyes soft, head  
at a tilt. I watched him cup a tomato beneath a light cascade  
of water, raise the salmon over his head, ease it down, smell  
the avocado, slice it slow, like a surgeon, lengthwise. He thinks

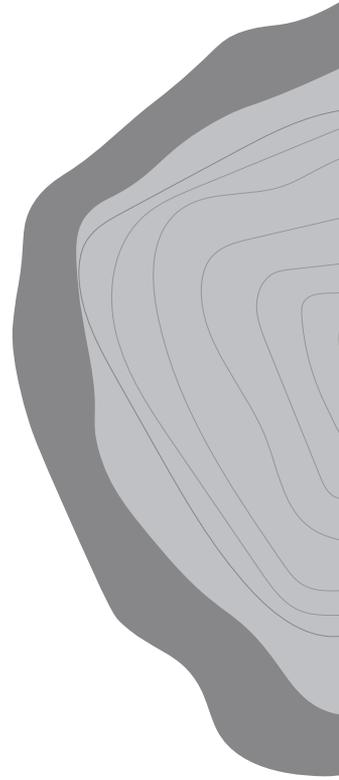
I did not see how he arranged them—the counter an altar,  
with spinach strewn like petals. The salmon on a blue plate,  
still with its head, eyes wide and sure about what lay beyond  
the rise of kelp and settle of coral. The chard, upright, in a vase,  
of wrinkle and crisp wave, of ease like low light in a forest.  
Tomatoes still on the vine between two halves of an avocado,  
one still pregnant with pit.

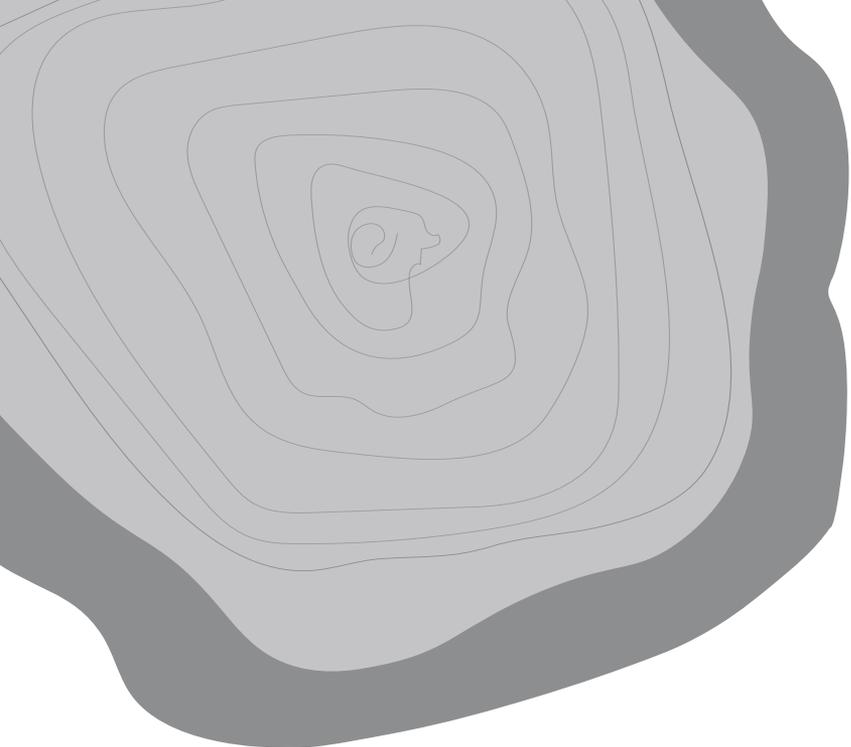
I don't know how someone comes to love food so raw,  
unimagined, before pepper and salt.

He serves me, watches my face, tells me what I'm about to eat,  
as if with the telling I'll understand the grace of green and the red  
of what ripens, the flesh of yellow not yellow that cleaves to a seed,  
the gift of a fish. He breathes into his glass of wine, is gone. I wait,  
sullen he has left me behind. I recall a poem: Oh, he was Salmon  
Boy! He could breathe everything! He could see everything! He raises

his glass in the candlelight and begins a story, an old story, one he will tell again. People, in a crescent arc around him, will nod

with the knowing of this story and that it is their story. My son, he is saying, gives thanks to the fish god when he pulls a salmon from the stream, cuts it open. He smiles, shyly, as if he believes I find the story simply amusing, as if I do not know he is his son, he is the salmon. He sips from his glass, long, then raises it to me once again and waits, as if this poet has words for the prayer he lives each moment he enters the kitchen.





## Beauty

*Elizabeth Landrum*

She might hide in a cluster of browning pine needles  
waiting for me to change my gaze, waiting for me  
to see the patterns she casts against the sky.

Sometimes she speaks through the flesh  
of a perfectly ripe avocado  
or sings hey sweetie from the beak of a chickadee.

There are times she gallops in, a wild stallion,  
nearly knocks me over ---  
then disappears in a tremor of hooves.

Always she surrounds me like air,  
yet it may take a gentle breeze  
to split the dandelion, seed from head.

Willow  
*Cindy Williams Gutiérrez*

The willow's green cauldron calls to me.  
It's 40 years since I climbed the old ash—  
my childhood sentinel. Last time I saw  
its canopy reach for the curb, new plumes  
of sky sifted through the heavy branches.

I sat across the street in a red rental  
pardoning the four cars in the driveway  
for their unfamiliar, colorless bodies.

Two hours before, my mother died  
at 3:24—the same smudged number  
on the wooden mailbox with the flag down.

This was the last day I would see  
all my safe places. I didn't dare  
knock on the front door or toll the bell  
next to the back door in the carport.  
But if I had, I'd have clanged twice and then run  
to climb the ash to unbury my sorrow—  
to imagine poems or gaze through this pane-  
less window into neighbor's lives. Nothing  
stirred but the bird flapping in my chest.  
Here, in my meadow 2,000 miles northwest,  
the willow drapes at my feet. I reach up, climb in.

# After Returning to Fort Lewis

*Toni Partington*

inside his buried self  
is what's left of a crack in the world  
a fissure torn open by memories  
of bones and blood  
and a rigid doctrine  
he can't leave behind

his buried self cries in despair  
for love without boundaries  
a longing to connect  
like a land mass before it becomes  
a continent defined by its shores

unfamiliar with tricks and trust  
he seeks compassion from others  
only to reject simple kindness  
by speaking his truth in loud spurts  
he's been told to avoid  
school zones and neighborhood parks  
where outbursts make others uncomfortable

so he walks for miles humming  
old love songs still stuck in his head  
when desperate, trades his buried needs  
for some understanding or  
a loving touch  
a soft shoulder for his cheek  
a love letter for his pocket

he withholds deeply buried wisdom  
afraid of the consequences of loyalty  
still able to salute the flag, yet  
unable to sit down for dinner  
fear of small talk keeps him  
alone on holidays

half-buried in recurring thoughts  
now an unbeliever in wishes  
facts his only currency  
sunlight his savior  
thunder his shadow

when he passes on the street  
you widen the distance  
as if you never bury yourself  
grateful for his silence and  
relieved he doesn't ask for change  
or a few simple words of kindness

# The Bismark Sails Again

*Christina Butcher*

Some harbors are too shallow  
To carry the weight of a gunship

The waters too calm to hold the whip-cracking  
Sound of a sailor at the turret

Bullet blasting  
Father into the sea  
While mother spits grit into his teeth

Give the boy a name, she gulps  
Give him bombast enough to anchor him  
To the sea.

Waters rise and fold - men are lost

Still, a ship must push forward  
Between ocean and sky

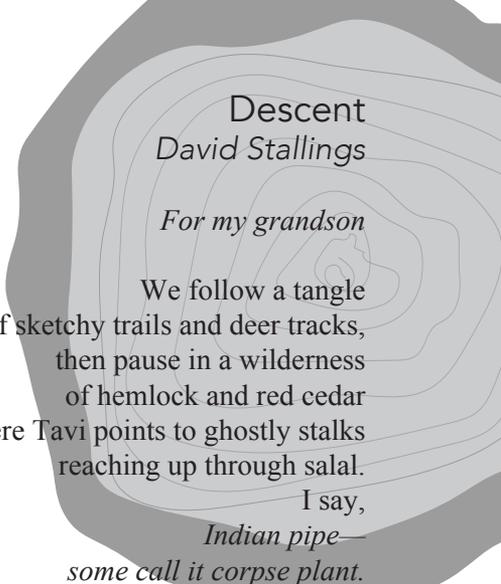
Skirting crooked shorelines  
Where the tawdry gesticulate

Waving to Caesar, sending Nora off with love  
To tussle the winds of far deeper waters.

But let no one lament  
Because some ships- like names - must chase the sun

Their withered moons locked below deck  
Where Anton and Bruno will not find them  
And the boom of passing boats cannot swing them leeward

Some ships must sail past us.



Descent

David Stallings

*For my grandson*

We follow a tangle  
of sketchy trails and deer tracks,  
then pause in a wilderness  
of hemlock and red cedar  
where Tavi points to ghostly stalks  
reaching up through salal.

I say,  
*Indian pipe—  
some call it corpse plant.*  
*But hey, we better head back to camp.*

Sun has slipped low.  
Light fades  
to a green urgency

When the trail unravels again  
I'm not sure of the way.  
Tavi turns to the right.  
*Think so, man?*  
He nods.

More sure now, he leads us  
through dusk into night.  
How can he see?  
When the track ends at a drop-off  
he leaps from the ledge,  
supple as a panther, calls  
*Come down over this way.*

I back down the steep face.  
There he takes my hand.

I smile.  
He giggles.  
And the darkness shimmers.

