

RADIANT TO THE HEART



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A Journal of Zen Arts

VOLUME 1 - SUMMER 2020



**GREATER BOSTON
ZEN CENTER**

Dear reader,

Welcome to the first ever volume of the Greater Boston Zen Center creative arts journal, *Radiant to the Heart*. We are beyond excited to share it with you.

This project began in an effort to make visible the creative work of so many members of this sangha, often undertaken individually or in isolation. This sangha, we've learned, is secretly brimming with artists (and many who may shy away from the label "artist" but are nevertheless creators of art), and we longed to bring together this burgeoning community through a visual compilation of creative work.

As we began to collect submissions, we found ourselves delighted by the ways that contributions spoke to each other across the silences. Poems and photographs began to whisper, speak, raucously sing one another into existence, offering us lessons in intimacies unseen across space and time. Each new submission illuminated—and was illuminated by—all those that came before, in turn clarifying and complicating our understanding of any given poem or photograph. The body of contributions took on a vibrancy and an aliveness almost on its own accord, constituting a sangha in its own right.

As much as this journal serves as an expression of community, then, it is also a *creation thereof*. Voices nestle up against one another in the most improbable ways, each teaching us how to hear the other more fully. And thus we arrive at the doors of yet another virtual Zendo, yet another space where our individual practice can be held, supported, and enriched in sangha. Many of these works, it seems, have been waiting to be read together, becoming more fully themselves only in the context of the deep and textured intimacy that such a placing together allows.

After all, texts, too, can gather; images, too, can hum one another alive. See, for instance, how Fran Ludwig's "Conveyor Belt of Love" transforms and transmutes the "almost-worlds" that scatter in every breath of "What Goes Through You," or how Robyn Reed's "End of Season" provides a playful conclusion to the continual mistakes of Harry Gordon's "Breaking Ground." Sandy Wamsley's "fox in the snow" renders literal the linguistic leaps of

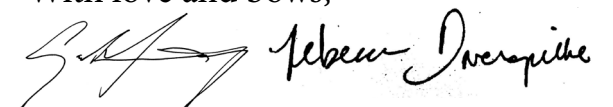
Suzanne Barrett's "Everything," and Michael Lapedes's "The Way I Must Enter" presents a vivid illustration of the dreamy (yet dreamless) topologies of Zachary Horvitz's "Tuesday Morning" and "Untitled." In Sarah Fleming's "Bright Dying Things" and Catherine Wong's "The Clouds Remind Me of the Earth's Rotation," turning takes on new meanings as lentils left uneaten and crying clouds alike continue on beyond and without us. And Robyn Reed's Birch Forest series offers refuge throughout, an in-between space for the dreams of Luis Valles's "Between Waking and Sleeping" and a concretization of the "hospital / [as] a forest filled with wildflowers" in Rebecca Doverspike's "Hospital Shift During the Pandemic."

Each contribution, then, fundamentally alters the others. Each is necessary to the others' existence, and each beckons the others into relationship, creating and cultivating intimacy among word and image, text and text, artist and artist. In this way these contributions can teach us how to look, how to see, and, at bottom, how to enter into relationship with one another and allow ourselves to emerge transformed.

At the close of "Kintsugi," Josh Bartok writes of "fragments held apart / By the very medium / Of golden intimacy— / A holy broken wholeness / That can again hold the world." Consider this journal one such collection of fragments, at once held by and holding the intimacy that courses through this sangha in all its forms.

In this spirit, we ask you to accept this humble offering of hearts broke-open, of seemingly disparate shards held together and apart so that they can more fully hold this community and this world. May they be friend, companion, and guide to you as they have been to us. And may they be as radiant to your heart as they have been to ours.

With love and bows,



Sarah Fleming & Rebecca Doverspike
Greater Boston Zen Center

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A Love Letter to the World

BY SARAH GAY

A break from isolation
I walked around my neighborhood today
Something surprising
My feet were greeted
with sidewalk chalk rainbows.
Five to be exact.
Each rainbow was drawn by a person.
The waiver of each line
Showed their hand.
Rainbows for those of us lost in this moment
It just so happened that I had decided to walk only on the sunny side of the street today.
Crossing the street in zig zags to meet the warmth
Each time being greeted by rainbows
The person who left these
Were they seeking warmth too?
How did they know how much I needed these rainbows today?
Upon meeting my last one, I heard a song
It was a familiar car alarm tune being sung by the neighborhood mocking bird.
I followed her voice.
She was balanced on the fence
I walked closer, to listen to her familiar song
A tune I can predictably hum myself.
Am I sad that our world has altered her tune?
Am I delighted we can sing together?
Strangers passed on the street
6 feet of distance between all of us.
We do not know one another, but we know this moment.
We know this situation too.
Like me and the mocking bird.
We are hearing the same tune.
Somehow in this isolation and distancing
We are brought together with distant smiles
I see you
You see me
Seeking the sunnier side of the street
Especially in this unfamiliar moment in time.

Untitled

BY RICK HARDY

Slapped at birth
to begin breathing
welcome to the world, kid
suffering
the first noble truth
throughout life, the ease of breath
shortness only to come
lungs filling, drowning in dry air
desperately clinging
11 dead at soldiers home
5 with the virus
every second cries of thousands being born
cries of thousands dying
being present for all of it



Rick Hardy

Sunday Morning Reflection

BY LIBBY FAY

When joy is raucous we forget
that sorrow has its own songs.

We forget that tears flow regardless
and grief has many gifts.

Tenderness overwhelms what
feels like normalcy and

reminds us there is no exception
for the young can also die.

Strange how a bit of sun, a patch
of spring flowers and

tulip petals still perilously
attached, forget to remind us

of past and present griefs
always already given, and loved.

After Memorial Day

BY LIBBY FAY

I'd forgotten what joy it is
to see life returning to life
until just now, the small and large
brown trout joying in a river too long
dead to any suchness,
the goslings nestled as they pull and tug
at grass green enough even for me.
The entire bird kingdom orchestral for
weeks now without my understanding
the song in all its texture-ous depths.
Life knows itself and returns into itself
despite us, again and again.
For this moment, all is well, all is well.



Josh Bartok

What Goes Through You

AN EXQUISITE CORPSE

In every breath, almost-worlds scatter
 Keeping rejection at bay is only self-rejection.
 May we hold the love unborn
 Everything is turning. It's scary, but I like it.
 I love the idea of contrasts and possibilities
 Opening beyond the glowing wreck
 Oh, to become all flame—
 Flush with a fierce tenderness for the universe itself.

Conveyor Belt of Love

BY FRAN LUDWIG

Breath of life
 Breath of love
 Pulsing through the veins of time
 My exhale is your inhale
 My heart's rhythm syncs with yours
 Hearts filled to overflowing

Love spills out
 In the ten directions
 Wafted on unseen currents
 Circulating everywhere

Transforming Transmuting Transmitting Translating

Tears into presence
 Care into kindness
 My prayer becomes Your offering
 Your offering inspires My service
 My heart moves your hands
 Your gift moves my heart
 The distributed intelligence of Kwan Yin's heart
 Transporting love
 From my heart To yours
 And yours And yours

Each heart
 A love magnifier A love multiplier
 A love amplifier A love synthesizer
 A cascade of compassion
 Touching lives
 One shared heartbeat at a time
 A beginningless and endless
 Conveyor belt of love

Everything

BY SUZANNE BARRETT

Breaking heart
Spacious mind
Do no harm
Loving kind

Guanyin’s hands
Seek The Way
Dharma speaks
Day by day

Witness All
Awakened, Be
Compassion guides

Free

Untitled

BY ALLAN POOLE

A Yes will only grow
in soil best for No’s



Sandy Wamsley

Breaking Ground

BY HARRY GORDON

I've made a mistake. A big, terrible mistake. I've overcommitted and I have no idea what it is I'm doing. I'm a lucky renter in Somerville, MA who has an honest-to-goodness backyard with some grass, and a tree, and a deck and all of that.

I need a reason to get outside, to be active, to be doing something. I also want to feel safe doing it. Simple walks and trips to the store have felt like dodgeball; avoiding this person without a mask, standing to the side while this group goes by, stepping out of the aisle to allow a browser to slowly make their way to the end.

My own backyard, literally, would be a safe spot. I would refresh the space with some serious pruning, a full lawn and a garden to grow my own veggies.

The pruning began by first ordering something called a "garden pruning saw." It arrived, looking as mean and as sharp as the beak of a velociraptor, and folded out like a pen knife built for a giant.

What I did to that tree was necessary, but it wasn't pretty. Within hours its hulking, shade throwing mass was whittled down to a hefty trunk over-supporting some meager limbs. Mercy was not on my mind. Sunshine would not be blocked.

Soon to arrive was my order of Titan Rx Tall Fescue, a grass seed chosen for its vigorous and hardy temperament that would surely overcome my neglectful lawn creation plan. I was gonna go fast and hard. After some sampling digs into the ground, I determined the soil to need no further adjuncts. However, it was tightly compacted.

Enter the roto-tiller—a multi-tined cousin to the snowblower that chews up stubborn dirt and lays it back down all disassembled. A kind, smiling man from Carlisle, MA was hired to go to town on my approximately 550 square feet. In less than an hour I had gloriously soft, deeply aerated earth, ready to be seeded and bloom into a lawn. "You're not using a roller, huh?" he asked. "Nope!" I said assuredly. This was the first time I had ever heard about a roller.

He left, and so I went about raking up what weeds I could. I couldn't rake up many. Which didn't bother me because I was confident that the Titan X Tall Fescue seed would beat any weeds to the surface. The problem was that this deliciously soft, confetti-like soil was a real bear to walk across. And when you did, that softness went away, leaving deep footprints that really didn't come out. I bet a roller would solve that.

Whatever. I grabbed the bag of fescue seed and started broadcasting as directed, gently raking it in, and then lightly wetting the soil. It's at this point that a prudent lawn lover would spread mulch on top—keeping the soil moist and protecting the seeds while they begin to set their roots in the ground. Mulch, shmulch!

Just then, nature pays me a visit. You know who loves grass seed more than someone who wants a great lawn? Birds. I sat, with a garden hose, for about an hour, protecting my lawn, MY lawn, from the tiny beasts using short bursts of water. They were relentless and loud, and kept returning. It was like from that movie.....The Birds. I became unhappy with the growing sense of who I was. A grouchy man, protecting his ungrown lawn from birds with a garden hose. I went inside.

Ten days later, nothing. Maybe the birds had eaten all the seeds. Maybe the days I didn't really water the dirt caused them to wilt and die. I caved. I bought fertilizer. Okay, so, they do recommend putting fertilizer down at the same time you put the seed down. But, you know, the soil looked good. And it was roto-tilled. And it was Titan Rx Tall Fescue. I mean, come on!

Fertilizer was spread, and within days, wisps of fuzzy green sprouted up, like the head of a bald man who had been using Rogaine with chlorophyll for a month. Encouraged, I started to water more consistently. Soon enough, the yard was dotted with islands of thick, green fescue straining to achieve their touted "tall" status. It was also dotted with bare spots, now being overrun by weeds. And ants. Ya, ants started to build little mocking ant hills in the bare areas. As if to say, "Oh you're not using this space? Great, thanks. We'll take it from here."

Meanwhile, my veggie seeds arrived. There was a little snafu with the first seed company I ordered from, so I asked to cancel that order, and ordered similar stuff from another seed company. Two filled orders later, I have seeds for two kinds of tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and lettuce.

"Shouldn't you have started some of those indoors a while ago? And aren't you late planting the other ones?" a reasonable gardener might ask. Yes and no. Yes, if you want to follow "guidance" and "directions," but no if you want to see what happens when you just sort of wing it. I'll plant them and go from there.

My drab and weather worn patio chairs were curb-alert worthy, but I wasn't gonna budge and buy new ones. I started to spray paint the metal ones with a bright, summery yellow, and the plastic ones are getting a fun coat of pink. They look good and are nearly done. Yaaa, but...you really should sand them down first and apply primer before you use the spray paint. We'll see what happens. They're drying in the sun right now. Hopefully, it doesn't rain in the next 48 hours.

I've lived under the tyranny of measuring what I do against the perfect way. That tyranny unfolds from imagining that there is a right way, a better way, an ideal way of doing anything. When the one who wants to do things perfectly appears, I thank them for their earnestness and presence. I set them down along with all the others, because to listen to only that one, would be to seek perfection. And that is a big mistake.

Oh look, it's starting to rain.



Robyn Reed

Diamond Sutra Dialogue

BY MICHAEL LAPIDES

*no front or back / no inside or outside / do
not cling to imagination or ideas / let them
go // there is no buddha to meet / no face
that is mine / there are smiles and tears /
let's go there together / without a plan*



*So you should view this fleeting world:
A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream.*

Willingness

BY DEB POND

When I left, I was sure that next time
would work out better; and actually,
it did work out better than I had imagined
the beginning to be.
Sitting in front of someone who does
not speak, a certain trust in the moment
develops. Without discussion, you just
know as much as you can, and this is
surprisingly enough. And even when you
arrive at a very satisfying place, it is not
usually possible to remember the route there,
where the momentum of taking immediately
whatever is given, moves things forward right away
no time to hold on,
no point calculating return.
All the same, and knowing the impossible,
I'd go back.
I'd know that when I left it all behind
wishing for this garden,
I held the seeds in that same hand.

Rituals

BY SAMUNA KC

When I came to GBZC for the first time, I came into the Zendo and saw a bunch
of white people bowing down to the altar and to each other. This was not the image I was
expecting to see in Boston, USA. I said to myself, “not again!”

I was born and brought up in Nepal, and grew up very closely with Buddhism and
Hinduism. I saw people bowing to each other, to the elderly, and to the statues of the
gods all my life. It was a ritual, among many other rituals I was actually running away
from it because I hate rituals. Because bowing is a sign of weakness and inferiority.

In the traditional Hindu marriages in Nepal, the bride's side of the family has to
wash groom's feet and drink water from it. I have seen my family doing it during my first
marriage. I love someone right now and wanna marry him, but I don't want my family to
go through the feet washing process again, that's why I wanna avoid the whole process of
the wedding altogether.

I didn't bow to anyone or anything for a long time, but I didn't stop coming to the
center, which I did many times in the past. I stop doing things when I have to follow the
rituals.

However, this time, the love and acceptance the people at the center offered me
have changed something in me, and I even started bowing.

Now I always bow.

Then how about the ritual of washing the feet of my husband? And drinking water
from it? Am I in the slippery slope of following every ritual?

Kintsugi

BY JOSH BARTOK

Broken already,
Breaking still,
And even still
will yet break more—

This bowl,
This world,
This heart.

Know that in breaking
Is also
A new wholeness,
A new holiness,
A new brokenness,

The shards bearing witness
To time and circumstance,
Error and intent,
Tragic, marvelous, or missing.

Oneness cracks
Into Multiplicity
And is remade,
Held together now
Only by the filaments
Of Indra's own net.

Fragments held apart
By the very medium
Of golden intimacy—

A holy broken wholeness
That can again hold the world.

Selected Haiku

BY MIKE CERONE

what is pandemic?
a koan of life and death
donning PPE

what is pandemic?
grocery store practices
lines with six feet gaps

what is pandemic?
fresh white disinfectant wipe
greeting gift

what is pandemic?
measuring total square feet
four tenths capacity

what is pandemic?
Zoom virtual backgrounds
hopes and fears

what is pandemic?
the bandana hiding my frown
from the unmasked

what is pandemic?
saying goodbye from a distance
to the ones we love

what is pandemic?
economies stalled and jobs lost
human value(s)

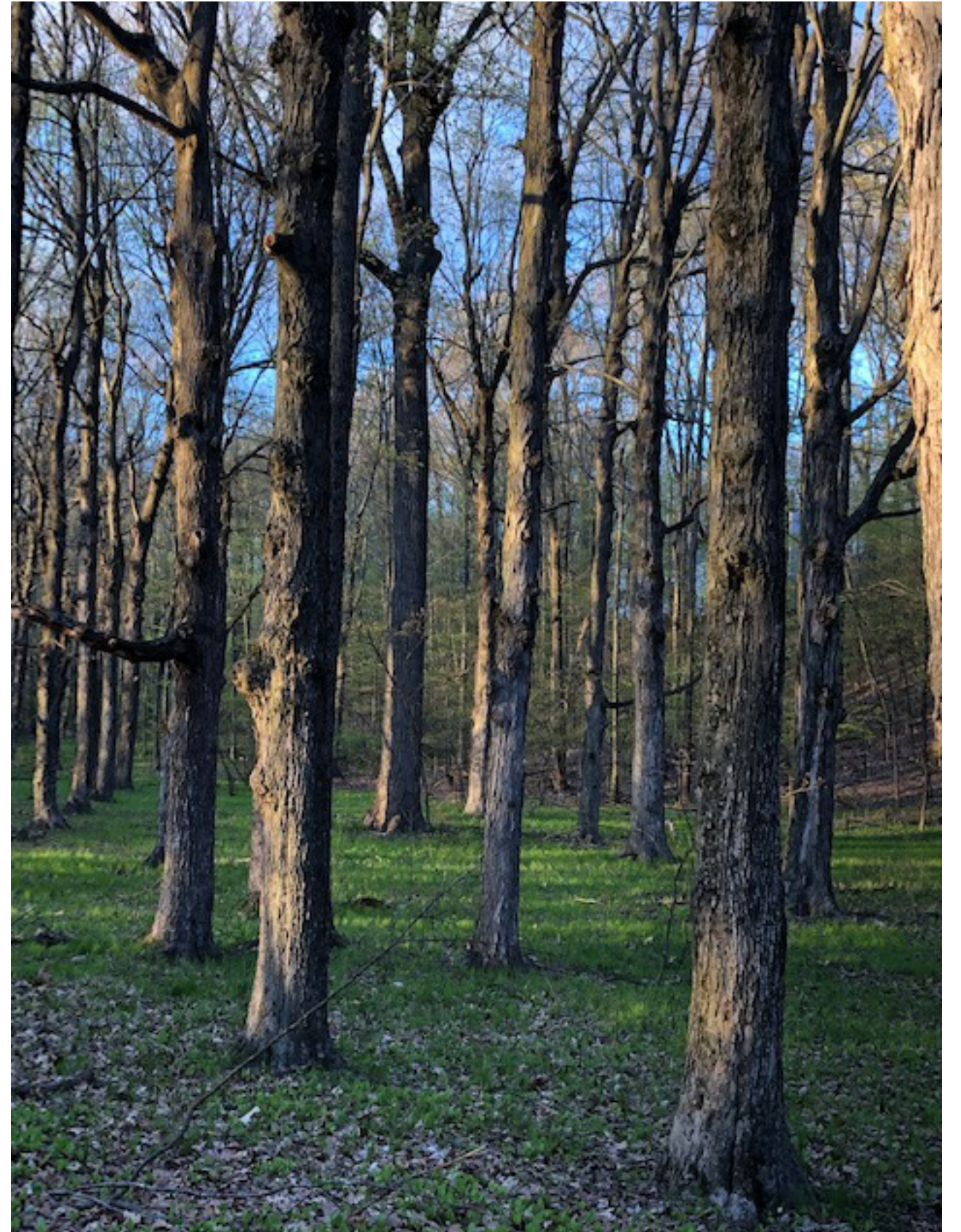
what is pandemic?
Kanzeon's myriad hands
essential workers

Selected Haiku

BY FRAN LUDWIG



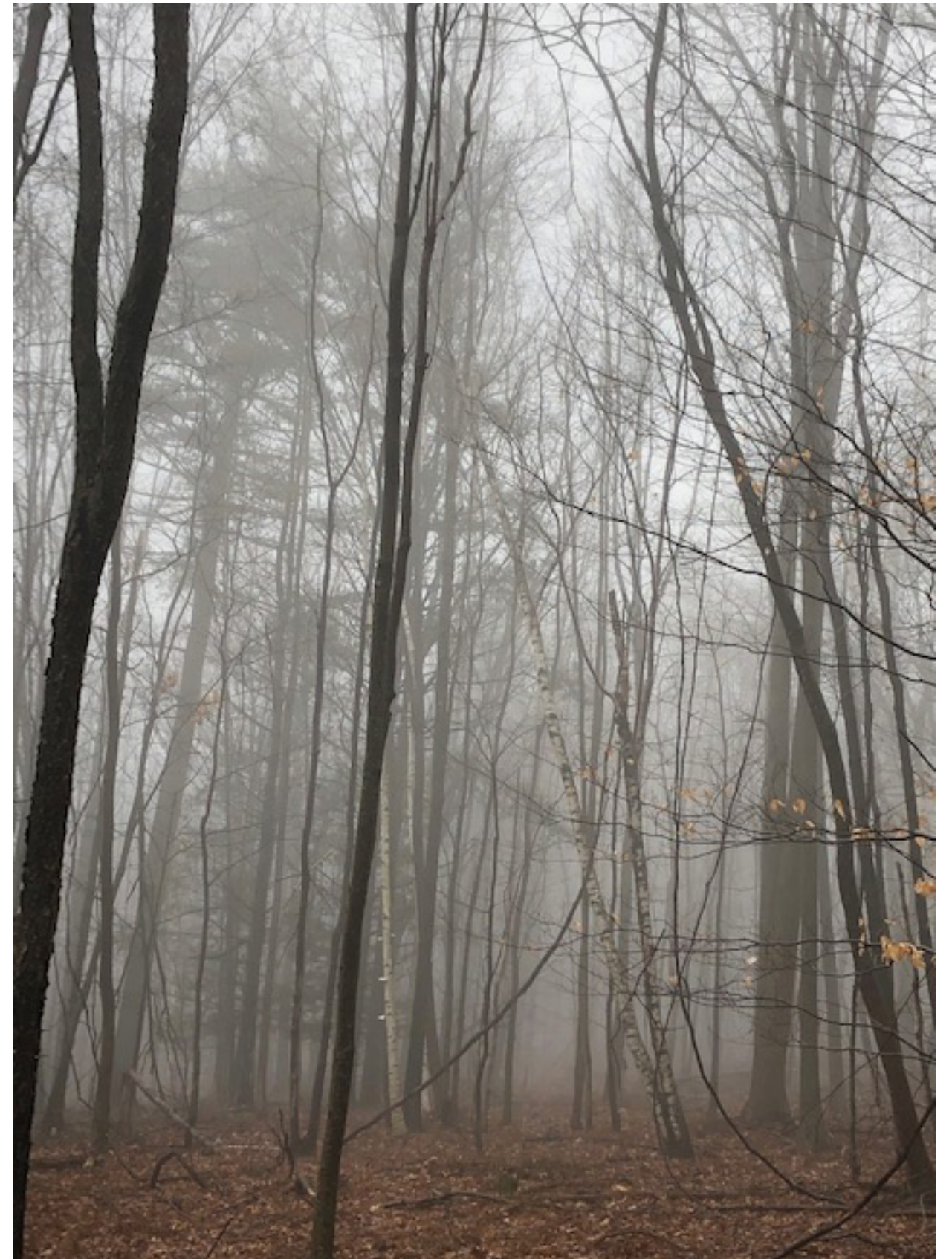
Wind, water, ice, stem / Ripples propagate through time / Every movement counts



Chanting vesper prayers / A choir of sugar maples / Bless the dying light



Raindrop necklaces / Crystals strung on branch and twig / Buddha's jewelry



Searching for answers / To clear up the mystery / Mystery answers



Imperceptibly / Unfurling in my own time / Opening to fullness

Two Short Statements

BY EDWARD ZLOTKOWSKI

I. My Koan

The master lived in a cave.
In front of the cave stood a dead tree.
One day a student came to study with the master.
“Tell me what I should do,” the student asked.
“Chop down that tree,” the master replied
And handed him a hammer.

II. Late Autumn

I am angry.
My work has come to nothing.
I take the new straw broom
and go to sweep the leaves
still falling on the moss.
Sweeping, sweeping, sweeping —
Small islands of green.

Tuesday Morning

BY ZACHARY HORVITZ

The topology is weird, goes nowhere.
We dissipate the entire woodland path
(Of the sojourner who never has died.)
So journey where? Indeed. Where the deed is,

That is where we are. Sometimes the deed
Is word, woven by a sophist or a sage.
Sage incense rises in the dorm-room of
A once-ambitious teen. He keeps one eye

Out of the head, hopeful to conquer
A whole academy. So hear him out
Or not, he reaps the failure of too many
Tomes, stored in the tower-room of the

Teetering college. Immolate the spheres,
Tell them. Desiccate the globes. Ambition
Will remain, a homunculus having the look
Of stars. Secretly where this all ends is where

You always wanted to be. The tomb
Is not a place. The grave is not a time.
Though branches rise above so many names
For heaven. Half your life you regurgitated

The automaton's dreams, and fled from much
Robotic speech. That was the trial yet.
To know the origin of glands that speak,
Inside out. To give happiness to the

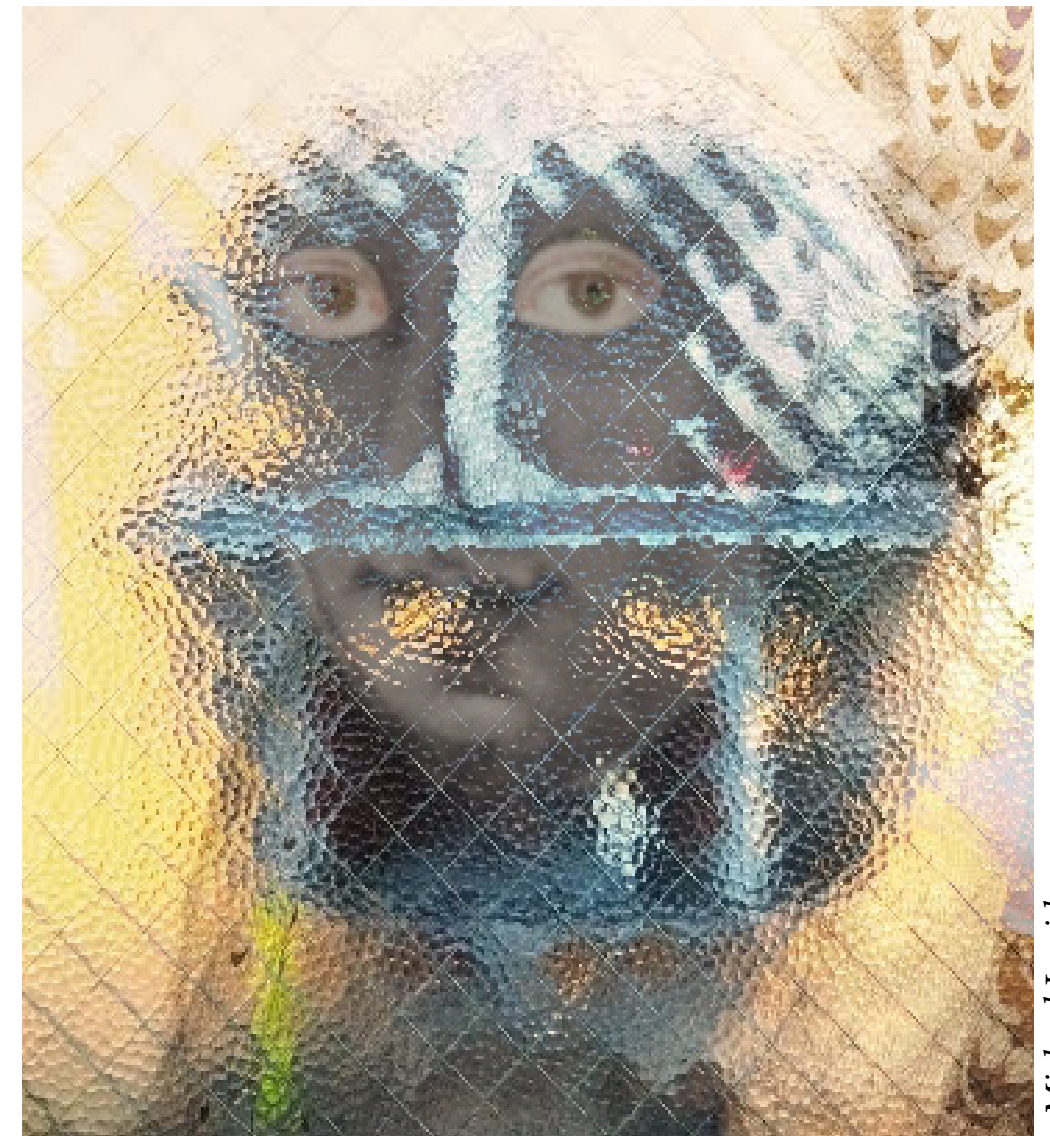
Gonads, glee to the heart. Everything
Is permissible here, and only that fact
Is some salvation. Finally one walks
The glistening cemeteries without thought

Of death. One eats the tree-bark even,
As though this were ever Eden.

Untitled

BY ZACHARY HORVITZ

When I saw the super moon on Vesak Day,
the dreamless mind floated into space.
You were there too, though far away.
I stayed up all night, not waiting
for any peaceful sleep to slow me down.
Buddha was born and died within a single frame,
so lived without lifespan, without age.
Nothing ever happened, nothing gained.
And yet still here, in us remains.



Michael Lapides

Imaginary Sutra of a Sotapanna

BY ZACHARY HORVITZ

When I was with Dipankara Buddha,
on a planet with two moons, he predicted I'd return.
Rebirth is not an extraordinary matter, he taught me.
Form changes, but that which is no-form
has always been. Thus there is no returning,
nor non-returning, to that which ever was.
Dipankara is here now, though imperceptible.
The Buddha yet to be is the Buddha who has been.
Thus what takes aeons to accomplish
is also instantly accomplished, from one perspective
and another. Where two moons were, a single moon.
Where one Buddha was, now two.
Wherever we first meet, is the original meeting-place.
When we meet again, is also the original meeting-place.
Truly there is no other place, no other other.
What was Dipankara then, is grasses and trees.
What is Siddhartha Gautama, is hedges and walls.
What is myriad planets, is a single sphere.
What is a single sphere is the original Buddha,
beyond acceptance and rejection. What is original Buddha
is not different from Dipankara's mind, many moons ago.



Robyn Reed

Sounds of Spring

BY CHERYL MORROW

To save all beings, the tiny frogs sing. Click [here](#) to hear their song.

sky series

BY PAUL MILLER

Since the fall of 2018 I've photographed the same section of sky from the same bus stop almost every work day. On some days, pointing my camera up towards what may seem to an observer as nothing special has felt as much performance art as picture-making. The sequence of individual photographs that comprise the 45 diptychs that follow is based entirely on the order in which they were "taken."

I offer this context to convey how the project is, for me, a form of investigatory practice, enacting questions such as, What happens when I relinquish some of the choices I could hold onto, that is, when I choose not to choose?

I encourage you to move as you wish among the images. And if you like them, please come back from time to time since the project is ongoing.

Enjoy the photos to the right, and see the full series [here](#).



Between Waking and Sleeping

BY LUIS VALLES

When did I begin to dream?
When I rested my gaze on a single leaf
and found beneath the fluttering clovers,
between the floating stems — a universe.

When the first terror gripped my child eyes
and I learned that the world can burn,
that people's hearts can always turn
and it leaves traces on their very skin that rise
like smoke from a dark and smoldering place inside.

At some point, did a small idea take root inside me?
Slowly growing layers and layers of complexity.
Attaching itself to every good intention, every sin,
until the vital vision is passed down to next of kin.
It's grown too big to hold,
Too tangled to see,
until I chisel free from beneath the bark,
the bare and breathing, living spark.
Where did it come from this seed?

And how many dreams do I carry with me?
How many still need time to form,
before they're born in a lonely dorm
as shapes that flow from a pen at night.
Ink bleeding onto the blank manila white.

Sometimes I can hear their desperate cries.
Their voices are like sacred fires in the skies.
What do they ask for?
What do they need?
For someone to scoop them in their hands,
to cup them close against their heart,
and whisper gently in the dark:
Sleep my little ones.
It's not safe for you right now.
I don't know how long the road will go,
but I promise you I won't let go
until the place where you can live is found,
and I will stop to plant you in the ground.
But now you must rest,
for both our sake,
lie still and dormant in my chest,
and wait to shake my life awake.



Bright Dying Things

BY SARAH FLEMING

These days I crave only perishables. A sprig of arugula, a single clementine in my palm. It is a small problem to have, considering, yet as I line my shelves with boxes and cans stubbornly impervious to death, I find myself dreaming of cartons of blueberries, of wine-red fingertips sticky with the extravagance of a perfectly ripe plum, of sudden bursts of tomato seeds. I long to catch them at the moment before they turn, the moment before mold and bruise and browning overtake them.

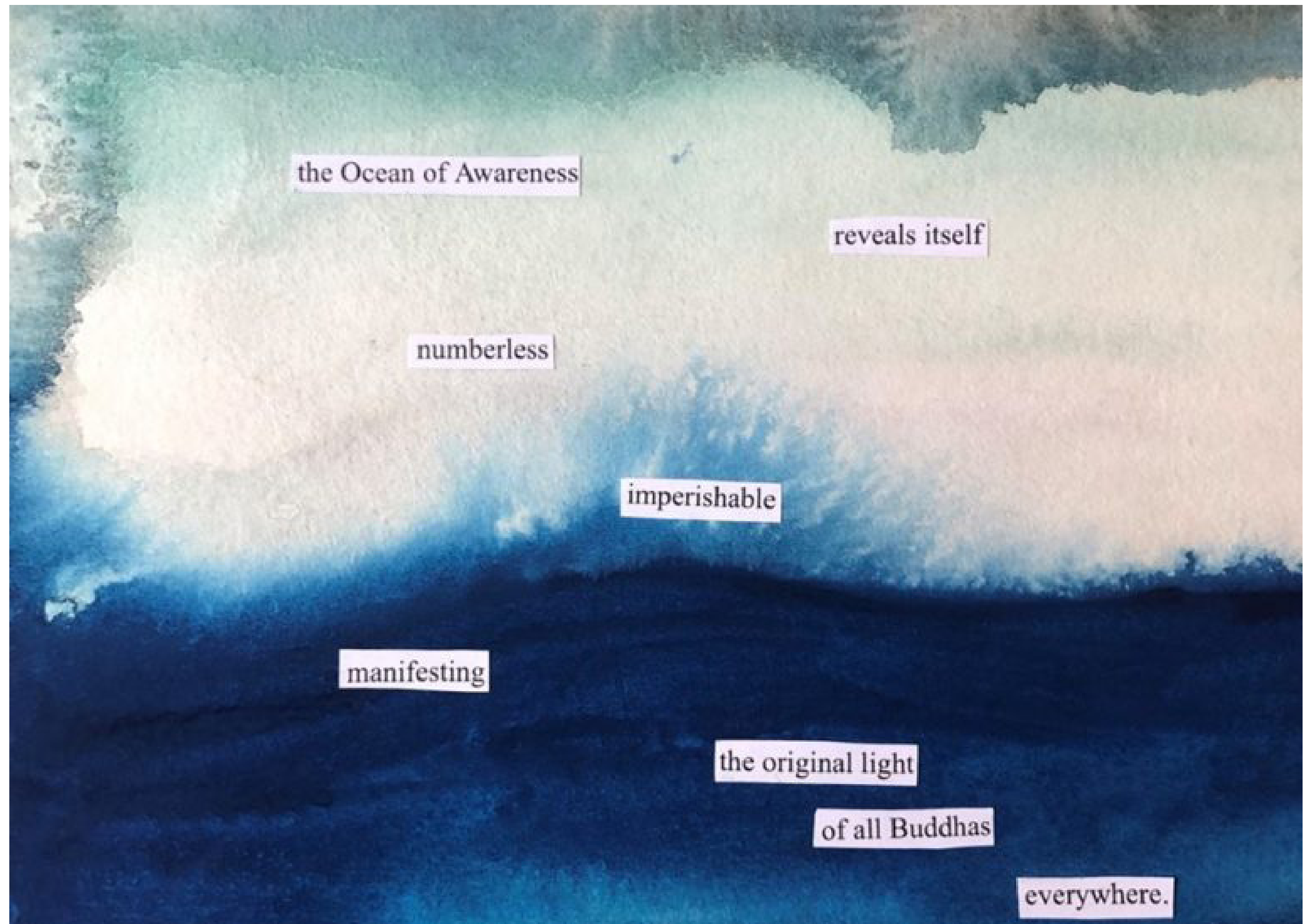
Perishable, as in *able to perish*. As in *All that I desire is finite*, which is to say *I desire only that which has the capacity to die*. After all, I, too, am perishable, bound to decay. One day my body will turn. It is already turning. It is inherently turning. Finite. Subject to expiration. Left uneaten, my lentils would outlive me. I can't imagine such unending existence, so I seek camaraderie among bright dying things. One warm body hurtling gently towards death seeking out another. They say that which cannot die cannot truly be said to be alive. Perhaps this is why I long to surround myself with dying life, if only to devour it.

This morning I peel my final clementine, knowing, for the time being, it will be my last. I hold it in the palm of my hand and marvel at its radiance, at its perishing. I draw out the peeling process, using my fingernails so as not to waste a single drop of juice, a single thread of pith. Slowly I devour it, sliver by sliver, savoring each bite, each small ecstasy. When there is nothing left to consume, I press palm to lips and search out its traces with the tip of my tongue. I lap up what it has left behind. One perishable seeking out another. One perishable perishing into the other.

The Clouds Remind Me of the Earth's Rotation

BY CATHERINE WONG

The billowing clouds of all shapes and sizes and all shades of whites and grey all float across the backdrop of sunshine blue so consistently and in sync that I think I can see the Earth's rotation. The spinning almost imperceivable to a miniscule being to the scale of the planet. Yet the clouds remind me that we are in constant motion whether we remember or notice it at all. Just like time can pass with shocking quickness as our eyes close at night Ticking closer to the unseen end The clouds cry themselves into oblivion to escape being this drifting reminder of things that will continue on without us Dropping into a tangible form Accessible by those connected to the ground by the weight of gravity Unable to drift along a peaceful galaxy of light blue any longer After all, if we were all to float up into the sky, all would be obscured, until the heavy weight of pressure transforms us into liquid.



The Ocean of Awareness

BY SARAH FLEMING

*Erasure of "Body and Mind, Ocean and Waves" by Keizan Jokin,
as found in the GBZC Sutra Book*

Drawing

BY LENIRA MIRANDA

How difficult it is to draw without seeing your drawing: seeing the form of what you are doing emerging just what is in front of you. How important it is to be able to see more than just yourself.

I bought these fish during my vacation in Malaysia. They symbolize Yin & Yang. They also express the flow, and why not the hope to navigate in better waters of life, with love and justice.



Home

BY REBECCA DOVERSPIKE

More effort for the ocean to speak than cry
silence slipping between rocks it has helped shape.

I, part of Earth's memory,
move through
only passing through—
once, after an Earthquake, I didn't know the earth had stilled, my body still
trembling.

Difficult to say if the ocean is in love with time
or if their collaboration constitutes its own longing,
at night the lake named after loneliness
reflects the stars I could fall
into the silken water moving the light without breaking it.
Where do you go so you can breathe?
Sometimes the mouth harbors the ocean
the way a dewdrop holds the moon in a blade of grass,
the moon knowing intimately its every trembling at each ankle's passing
each tremble the whole earth's trembling, I passing through, skin culpable
heart made of water, a porous ache
To what to whom do you belong?
When mouth holds the ocean, the tongue's language sings
even in storms.

But sometimes mouth is scattering stars on the surface of a lake
saying wait I can't count fast enough, can't account-for fast enough,
too much to ask a room to hold me,
room made from the ghost of trees,
room of deep time, floorboards of careful tenderness, and I move
at two speeds: geological imperceptible slowness, time held in rocks,
invisible breath of a mountain, stained glass still dripping at the window's edge,
and quick enough to be someone who was never there.

Hospital Shift During the Pandemic

BY REBECCA DOVERSPIKE

An elevator opens of its own accord, blinking me in;
doors creak, this side of time and the other side of time
separated only by a thin door in a hallway that still feels dark
even after the motion-sensored lights click on—which is flooded?
the hallway with light or the darkness?—
only this hush—
something has touched every corner of this place.

A man tells me how his mother died while he was in jail,
and I cry with him behind fogged up goggles.
In and out of homelessness, in and out of the methadone clinic,
I sit beside him. I have memorized
his fingers the way I memorize liturgy.

Stab wound in the ED. We look like bugs in this PPE.
In the dark we are fish or being fished. We want the moon.

Someone with wet eyes stares out the window: “I only know how to pray
in Arabic.” I note the beauty and suggest we pray the Lord’s Prayer together,
in Arabic and English. Lake eyes rain.

A Tibetan Buddhist hears me praying with her 91-year old Catholic roommate
and wants to join. We pull back the curtain that separates them.
I stand in the thin middle. “One seamless body.” And her joy,
cupping darkness between her palms
rubbing them together as though they were stones that could spark,
she asks for something, anything, to be written in that emptiness between her hands,
what is this, she asks? Everything is there: voice and silence. We smile.

The Catholic has a bright red rosary. “My sacred heart
goes with me everywhere I go.” And here we are immersed between
two shores, bone deep in uncertainty, and I want a sharp arrow with which to cut
through—
the sharpest— Manjushri, lend me the steel of your sword, the glass of it, cut and cut
through this suffering. Slice like a curtain pulled
down the middle of a room. But no,
just this ocean. Just the liminal spaces, flowers growing
between cracks in the concrete, dreaming of the forest.

I traded armor for ache and the hospital
is a forest filled with wildflowers.

“Come back and see me again,” she says bright but then concern floods her face.
“But know,” her voice gravity itself,
“that even if I’m not here, I’m still here.”



Robyn Reed



Robyn Reed

Epitaph

BY JOSH BARTOK

So long as someone, somewhere,
Looks out their eyes
—a deer who stares,
a girl who wonders why—
So long's a grassblade, somewhere,
Still cleaves the sky;
So long—
So long...
Then I have never died.

CONTRIBUTORS

Suzanne Barrett lives and breathes in Down East Maine. Everyday, she is invited to expand her lungs with briny air hugged by Canadian fog. Trees are neighbors. Bald eagles fly about forgetting they were once endangered species.

Josh Bartok's path to being an artist began when he realized artists were just people who make art, and not some other class of being. He frequently practices with feeling dim and dull, and nonetheless tries to cultivate gratitude.

Mike Cerone has been practicing with the GBZC community since 2008. He works in the technology sector and has an abiding love for the outdoors, especially hiking the White Mountains, as well as a deep commitment to caring for the earth. He regularly organizes Sangha hikes through the Middlesex Fells and serves as the Facilities Manager for GBZC—and he's also a haiku poet.

Rebecca Doverspike carries a memory from a Sesshin at Mercy by the Sea: a small, quiet candle flame lit on the Buddha altar, such concision, its reflection flickering on the windows against a giant sunrise. Voice can be like this: circling in kinhin, sometimes the quiet concentrated fire in mostly darkness, sometimes the large expansive fire across the sky, or, one flame inside another. Drawing a line to the edge of the page stretches it toward the edge of the ocean. By the ocean is where her heart feels most at home.

For **Libby Fay**, poems come from not thinking, often while she's out walking or sitting quietly. They are a form of not-doing. She finds them powerful ways to forget who and what she is, and to remember something bigger and more potent that she normally manages to forget.

Sarah Fleming feels most at home beneath the shade of beech trees. An amateur collagist, she enjoys cutting up shards of scripture and watching them (impossibly) recombine. Lately she has been collecting purples: the papers of garlic skins, the insides of pistachio shells, the undersides of leaves. She nurses a conviction that the clementine is the most pastoral of fruits.

Sarah Gay is both a wanderer & wonderer of the world. An illustrator & educator living each moment as it comes.

Harry Gordon is a writer, improviser, comedian and actor based in Somerville, Massachusetts. He lives with two cats, Huckleberry and Finn, who take precedence over all other responsibilities. A native of Vermont, he pines for the country life even while in the city, and feels he's still got enough Vermont in him to make a go of it as a "gentleman farmer." He began practicing Zen in 2013, finding GBZC because it was convenient on

his walk home from work. You can find him practicing on Saturday mornings when he doesn't oversleep.

In attempting photography and writing **Rick Hardy** deeply hopes that someday he will be ready and open to that moment / when a pebble // strikes bamboo

Zachary Horvitz fell in love with Zen literature and practice during his early teens. Basho's haiku journal was a great inspiration at a time in life when the freshness of poetic exploration meant the world. He is grateful for how this exploration has evolved, and grateful to be a human being.

Samuna KC has a natural instinct to bring people together from vast diversities. She is an actor, producer, personal branding expert, content marketer, and adamant explorer, always finding spaces to invest more in her idea of creating the global community.

Michael Lapidés makes photographic montages when he can't find words to match his thoughts and feelings. At other times, when the image and words are created together, he considers himself lucky.

Fran Ludwig is a lover of the natural world, which has served as a major dharma gate for her. She recently began writing poems inspired by her daily walks and discovered that the process reveals truths only apparent when words and the moment meet. In some mysterious way, this act of co-creation is disclosing who she truly is.

A couple of years ago, **Paul Miller** discerned that he perceives the world a little more two-dimensionally than many people. He's aware that this in itself is probably of interest only to him, but it helps explain the intuitive relationship he's had with photography since barely a teen. Lately he's fascinated by what might be described as the tension between the still- and the moving image, the whole fragment versus the whole.

Lenira Miranda loves this story from Anthony De Mello: Uwais the Sufi was once asked, "What has grace brought you?" He replied, "When I wake in the morning I feel like a man who is not sure he will live till evening." Said the questioner, "But doesn't everyone know this?" Said Uwais, "They certainly do. But not all of them feel it." Lenira sees herself as a seeker. She is also a passionate advocate for human rights and social development.

Cheryl Morrow practices Zen through the lens of science: astonished, surprised, and delighted in the infinite beauty and wisdom of the universe unfolding before us. The grace and eloquence of the Buddha's compassion is reflected in all things. Seeing the truth is enough—nothing is ever missing. And yet, the words of Neil DeGrasse Tyson speak loudly: "The Universe is under no obligation to make sense to you." How wonderful!

Deb Pond began her formal spiritual practice in a Yoga ashram where she lived 15 years, and has practiced Zen for the last 16. She enjoys cooking, writing, watercolor painting, and Cats.

Allan Poole lives in Middlefield, CT with his wife, Nancy. He has retired from a career in arboriculture, where he ran a tree service company. He also served as the Connecticut State Bee Inspector for a few years and started a company, Trees to Tables, building dining tables from 100-year-old tree trunks. He now keeps 20 hives of bees and enjoys gardening, hiking, camping, and the natural world.

Robyn Reed has always spent a lot of time in the garden, and in the woods. She finds great solace among the plants and trees, and she hopes to honor and respect their companionship and beauty with these portraits. She sees the arrangements as documentation of the relationship that she has had with the plants. These pieces depict their journey together, the joy they have brought her over the time that she has known them, and their sustenance to her.

Luis Valles realized amidst a streak of words that at some point he had begun to live the quiet questions of art that called him from an old, forgotten place. He doesn't yet know what form this will take. Most days he feels like he's standing blind before a stone statue. He feels the cool marble below his hands and carefully palms his way around it, hoping to sense the contours of this mysterious monument.

Sandy Wamsley thinks that making pictures, especially drawing, is a way for her to articulate in a creative way that mostly engages with her non-rational self. It seems very direct, and even physical, and is certainly a kind of meditation practice. It also teaches her patience, flexibility, and a kind of acceptance of the unknown.

Resilience artist searching for truth and trust in her own vision and experiences. **Catherine Wong** has been searching for this trust in the form of a flow through the body and out of her fingertips, whether it's through lines appearing out of nowhere, colors exploding, tapping of words, or a ripple of movement. She always wants everything to be perfect, without knowing what perfect means.

Edward Zlotkowski spent much of his career in higher education working on issues of community engagement and curricular reform. He now finds sustenance in his work with children, his piano, and his Zen practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, we are perennially indebted to the GBZC Sutra Book, which courses throughout this volume in ways seen and unseen. A number of contributions draw directly from its pages: the second text block of Michael Lapedes's "Diamond Sutra Dialogue" comes from the Diamond Sutra Gatha, and the title for his photo illustration "The Way I Must Enter" is taken from the poem of the same name by Izumi Shikibu. "The Ocean of Awareness" pulls from the Sutra Book as well, illuminating new possibilities that swim within Keizan Jokin's "Body and Mind, Ocean and Waves." The Sutra Book also reverberates in subtler ways: in the brown trout joying of Libby Fay's "After Memorial Day" and the tiny frogs saving all beings in Cheryl Morrow's "Sounds of Spring," in the movements of Guanyin's hands and heart in Fran Ludwig's "Conveyor Belt of Love" and Suzanne Barrett's "Everything," and in each and every offering members of this community have put forth. If you haven't yet explored the GBZC Sutra Book, you can access it [here](#) and allow it to become your companion and guide.

The seed of this project began in the Writing as Spiritual Practice Group. "What Goes Through You" arose line by line in a writing exercise of co-creation with all those in attendance one evening. Much like the rest of this journal, its beating heart is communal. Though the group began with writing, it includes and invites art and all manner of creative practices, and all are welcome to join. It meets the last Thursday of every month from 7-9pm. With any questions or comments, write to Rebecca [here](#).

Radiant to the Heart came to fruition through a collaboration of dear spiritual friendship. In fact, we feel it was *only* possible through kalyānamittatā. This journal has been a gift to its compilers, editors, and designers, Rebecca Doverspike and Sarah Fleming, as the two spent moment after moment in the best way moments can be spent: in conversation and process that stirred energy and deepened a reservoir for reaching out, gathering, and refining. Picture them shoulder to shoulder over a long candle flame late into the night putting the pages together, like so many students of Zen throughout space and time who love the teachings more through companionship. Sarah and Rebecca encourage all to follow the sparks of collaborative energy to see whatever it may blossom into. May it create healing, inward and thus radiating out.

We want to thank every contributor of the writing group and this journal. It is your voices woven together that creates a love shared.

Finally, yet endlessly, we are indebted to Rev. Josh Bartok for the title of this volume, and for his deep support of, and contributions to, the writing group. Sometimes we say, after Dogen, that Dharma talks may be "dark to the mind while radiant to the heart" as centuries of ancestors speak through each word. We are thus indebted to all our many guides along the ancient way.



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