

An abstract painting with thick, textured brushstrokes in shades of blue, orange, and white. The composition is dynamic, with a diagonal band of light blue and white running from the top left towards the bottom right, flanked by darker, more saturated colors. The overall effect is one of movement and depth.

Bookseller Review Copy · Not for Sale

whispers of humanity

poetry by
Kyle Hawke

paintings by
Wade Edwards

praise for *whispers of humanity*

whispers of humanity delves deep into the psyche of personal potential with a clear resounding voice. Words married to colours, in a beautiful weave of evocative emotions and passionate paintings, lead us into a philosophical garden of vivid imagery and vibrant thoughts. The innate talents of Kyle Hawke and Wade Edwards, blended in verse and art, are monumental indeed and they shine like a wishing star on every polished page. When I finished perusing this book, digesting the words and drinking in the images, I felt an inner blessing stir in my soul, alive with the hue of hope and the posit of possibility.

Candice James
Poet Laureate Emerita
New Westminster, BC

Kyle Hawke and Wade Edwards have created a stunning combination of words and images that make every page of this beautiful book a surprise. The poems, like the paintings, are often abstract and impressionistic, making each entry the kind of surprise one usually finds when turning the corner in a garden filled with riotous, varied blooms. Poetic images and questions are juxtaposed over equally poetic and evocative colours and images that reflect the world we live in and the emotions we feel. Bravo.

Brad Fraser
Playwright/Director

At once raw and visceral, transcendent and luminous, *whispers of humanity* moves beyond the union of image and word to become a primer on being fully human. Seductively evoking all six senses, it casts its spell and we are drawn deep into its beating heart and we begin the journey to our own.

From fractured kaleidoscopes of colour to fragile sweeps of moth wings, ice crystals, the masterful placement of text within images is an artform in itself. We experience the alchemy of poetry, visuals, and juxtaposition.

This exceptional collection does not simmer for the pretty and the pleasant, but intoxicates and entreats us, caresses and provokes us. Wielding metaphor and analogy with exquisite precision, it transforms the secular into the sacred, the mundane into the magical. It is entirely human.

Sylvia Taylor
Author of *The Fisher Queen*
and *Beckoned by the Sea*

praise for *whispers of humanity*

Poet Kyle Hawke has collaborated with the artist Wade Edwards to create work of great beauty and fire in their collaborative volume, *whispers of humanity*.

Kyle was able to balance the juxtaposition of multifarious colour and mood with his strong gift to choose the perfect word to connect with the reader's heart.

Both Kyle and Wade work with imagination to marry thought with form. From these artistic explorations, Kyle worked with many brushes to create both short and longer poems using his delicate subtlety and strong voiced authenticity.

This is a collection that traverses many landscapes, but always with a keen awareness of narrative and imagery.

This fine collection was made even more intense and lovely with the perfect union of art and word.

Jude Neale
Author of 7 books including
A Blooming

This merging of words and art is vibrantly alive. The combination of Wade Edwards' brightly colourful art with Kyle Hawke's spoken word poetry makes the words jump off the page in a way that's almost audible.

Heidi Greco
Author of *Practical Anxiety*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote, "A man should... read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful."

Poet Kyle Hawke and artist Wade Edwards' book, *whispers of humanity*, does just this. It provides an escape into the realms of the creative, finding meaning in Kyle's words while getting lost in Wade's imagery. I have always been a fan of artistic collaboration and the authentic expression it produces when paired befittingly.

The words seem to flow around the pages but are delightfully contained by the originative imagery that pulls, twists, fades, and at times controls the direction in which they appear to you.

Like a good evening cup of tea after a long day, I steeped myself in this book and thoroughly enjoyed the engaging and refreshing poetry and art that I was set adrift in.

James Picard
Artist/Director/Filmmaker



Spring Has Sprung

*whispers of
humanity*



Shredded Within

*whispers of
humanity*

*poetry by
Kyle Hawke*

*paintings by
Wade Edwards*



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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Whispers of humanity / poetry by Kyle Hawke ; paintings by Wade Edwards.
Names: Hawke, Kyle, 1968- author. | Edwards, Wade, 1973- artist.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20190122935 | Canadiana (ebook) 20190122943 | ISBN 9781988915159 (softcover) | ISBN 9781988915166 (HTML)
Classification: LCC PS8615.A8173 W55 2019 | DDC C811/.6—dc23

Editor: Bonnie Nish
Artistic Editor: PJ Perdue
Proofreader: PJ Perdue
Cover and Book Designer: Kyle Hawke
Front cover art: *Horizons* by Wade Edwards
Back cover art: *Fireflies* by Wade Edwards

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First publication, August 2019

Dedications

For the Gathering Place Poets,
especially those who've gone:

Jerry Appleton,
John-Ward Leighton,
Muriel Marjorie,
Bud Osborn,
and Pete Schweitzer

Kyle Hawke

To Christy
and my children,
Kassidy,
Bryson,
Ocean-Lee,
and Damon
who inspire while
I create my art

Wade Edwards

If we were to thank all the poets,
there would simply be too many
to name. So let us thank the
poetry itself, those words that
make us think or feel in ways
we hadn't thought or dared to
previously.

If we were to thank all the
painters, there would again
simply be too many to name.
So let us thank the paintings
themselves, those images that
show us how things really look
below the surface, stripped of
their trappings.

Kyle & Wade

Burgundy II

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shhh!

Ring of Fire



shhh!
can you hear it?
that singular soulful solo that never ceases
that hum that hides in the heart of everything
that song of silence?

shhh!
can't you feel it?
quell the qualms that cause question
while will waits in the womb of the undone
sense the senselessness
cease your struggle

shhh!
give in.
shhh!
give in.
shhh!

be one with being
be one being with something to share
in the quiet calms
in the fragile falls of time
stumbling slowly towards too late




shhh!

be a panther prowling night
deliberate in gentle grace
each movement a new vocabulary
written in shades and hues
never seen by man

shhh!

be carefully crafted in marble
standing strong over all
perpetually proud and tall
days divided between casting shadows
and resting in them



Autumn

shhh!

be always aware of the world
as if the first child
each moment a new vista
one with mountains
by the simple act of seeing them

shhh!

be flames flickering as they please
changing all with a touch
never resting, always aglow
absorbing the world
in random licks of light



Abstract 8

let the sound that abounds resound
listen like it matters
listen because you do
because the beat of your step
should never be out of time
with what truly moves you

the ambience is not just the audience
it is the performance
step onto the stage and listen.

shhh!
let it settle in
then never settle for less.

building blocks

bricks and mortar
shelter peasants and kings alike
the basic building blocks
make no separation by status
the same walls can enclose both dirt and gold

flesh and blood
shelter peasants and kings alike
the basic building blocks
make no separation by status
the same heart can enclose both dirt and gold

inside,
we choose who we are
what we will be
and whatever that might mean

outside, however,
histories are built of sturdier stuff
selecting very few to shelter
very few to hold up
above the muck and mire
the rest of us trudge through


and in that moment
when one of the eyes of history
catches you in its sight
it is not 'as above, so below'
it is all or nothing

when — if — your chance to rise arrives
do not be shy
do not let yourself
feel small
sing your most secret songs
slay the giants who bedevil you
fire the muck and mire
into bricks and mortar
and build an edifice
that will house the future

else, end up forgotten by time
more base clay collecting on and weighting down
the feet of those who will follow

let them rise
linger in the air like lilting chords
belt out those notes which can shatter swords
harmonize with the hum all about you
mouth the hymn that heals the hurt
duet with divinities
do it
do it now

leave no notes for later
no stains on paper
that do not echo through the halls



that silence is like love unspoken
it is meaningless
and leads to madness

as the caged beast will gnaw and bite itself
the caged heart will pump acid and bile
it must be free
each beat must etch itself into hills and valleys
resounding being all it knows

love sounds
let it resound from you
and in you
let it be heard from your lips
and trilled into your ears
and then,

histories
still to be spoken
will listen.



Christy in Vancity

circles (in the square)

a circle in a circle in an oval
so simple, so complex
the slightest movement says so much
tells too many things

walking through the square
circles in circles in ovals in pairs
shift and scan, most seeing past you
but a few, telltale, bounce back on making contact

the traces of their passing remain
forming questions: you? them?
are those clothes wrong?
that hair unkempt?
that mouth askew?
the skin too strange?

are the subtleties seen misinterpreted?
that you live untrue or love unjust
or that they simply wonder if you do?
do their inquests introduce indecencies virally
writing themselves into your cells
challenging your defences?

Discreet

Way Forward

are the subtleties you see misinterpreted?
are shallow searches once written onto you
now written onto others as response?

centered in the square
a pair of circles in circles in ovals
catches yours
responds with a smile
you know that you don't know why
you know that why doesn't matter
and a pair of ovals separated by a line
curve

and you know the next
pair of circles in circles in ovals
that trip when their journey intersects yours
will be greeted similarly
and why won't matter
because why *couldn't* matter
so if something so simple, so complex
will tell so many things
then those may as well be clear.

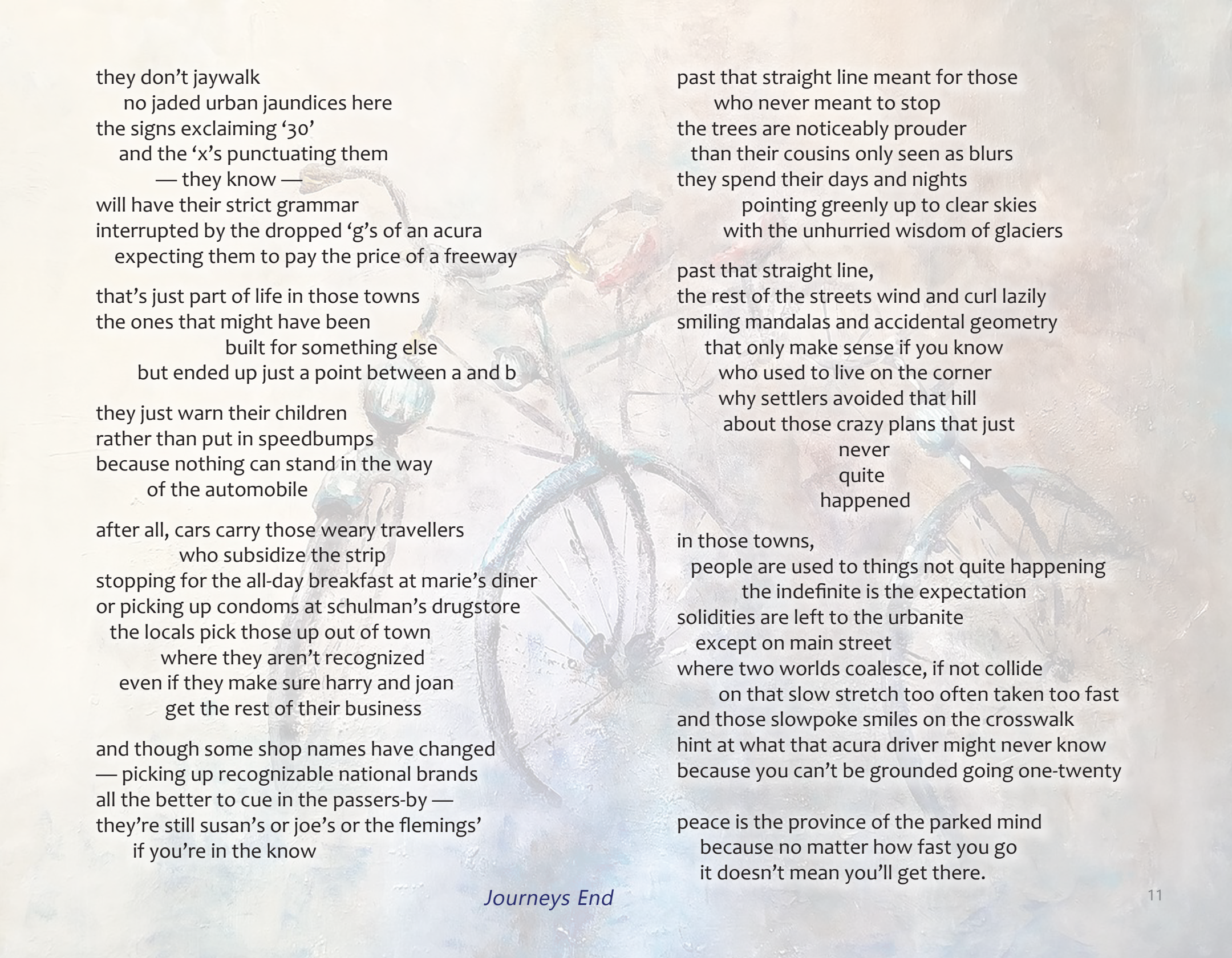


Christy



*slowpoke
smiles*

ninety clicks
 (one-twenty, really)
drop down to forty, less
highway becomes main street
the blur of trees getting carbon dioxide
 good as they can give it
shifts to the solid lines
 of pedestrian crossings
 populated by slowpoke smiles



they don't jaywalk
no jaded urban jaundices here
the signs exclaiming '30'
and the 'x's punctuating them
— they know —
will have their strict grammar
interrupted by the dropped 'g's of an acura
expecting them to pay the price of a freeway

that's just part of life in those towns
the ones that might have been
built for something else
but ended up just a point between a and b

they just warn their children
rather than put in speedbumps
because nothing can stand in the way
of the automobile

after all, cars carry those weary travellers
who subsidize the strip
stopping for the all-day breakfast at marie's diner
or picking up condoms at schulman's drugstore
the locals pick those up out of town
where they aren't recognized
even if they make sure harry and joan
get the rest of their business

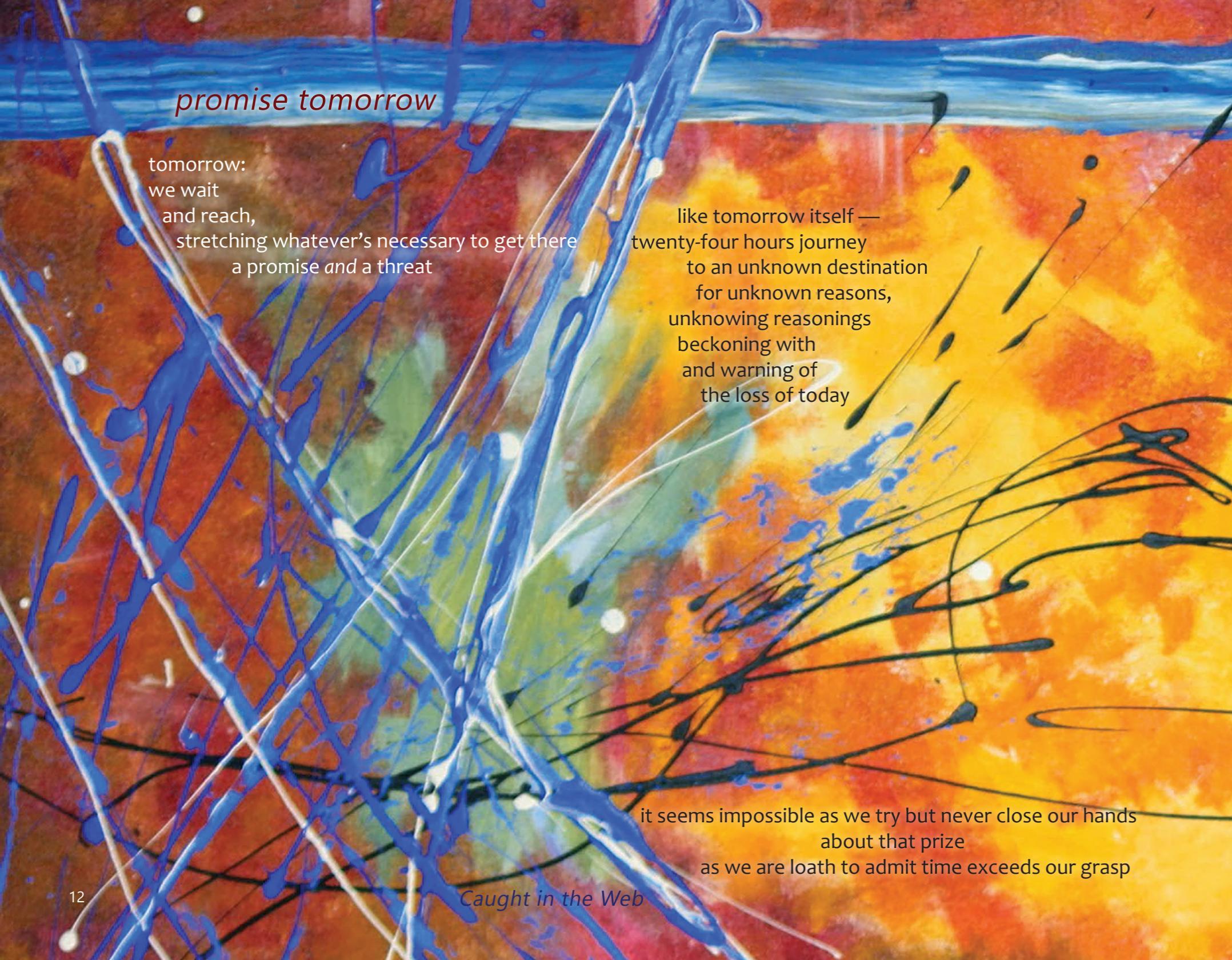
and though some shop names have changed
— picking up recognizable national brands
all the better to cue in the passers-by —
they're still susan's or joe's or the flemings'
if you're in the know

past that straight line meant for those
who never meant to stop
the trees are noticeably prouder
than their cousins only seen as blurs
they spend their days and nights
pointing greenly up to clear skies
with the unhurried wisdom of glaciers

past that straight line,
the rest of the streets wind and curl lazily
smiling mandalas and accidental geometry
that only make sense if you know
who used to live on the corner
why settlers avoided that hill
about those crazy plans that just
never
quite
happened

in those towns,
people are used to things not quite happening
the indefinite is the expectation
solidities are left to the urbanite
except on main street
where two worlds coalesce, if not collide
on that slow stretch too often taken too fast
and those slowpoke smiles on the crosswalk
hint at what that acura driver might never know
because you can't be grounded going one-twenty

peace is the province of the parked mind
because no matter how fast you go
it doesn't mean you'll get there.

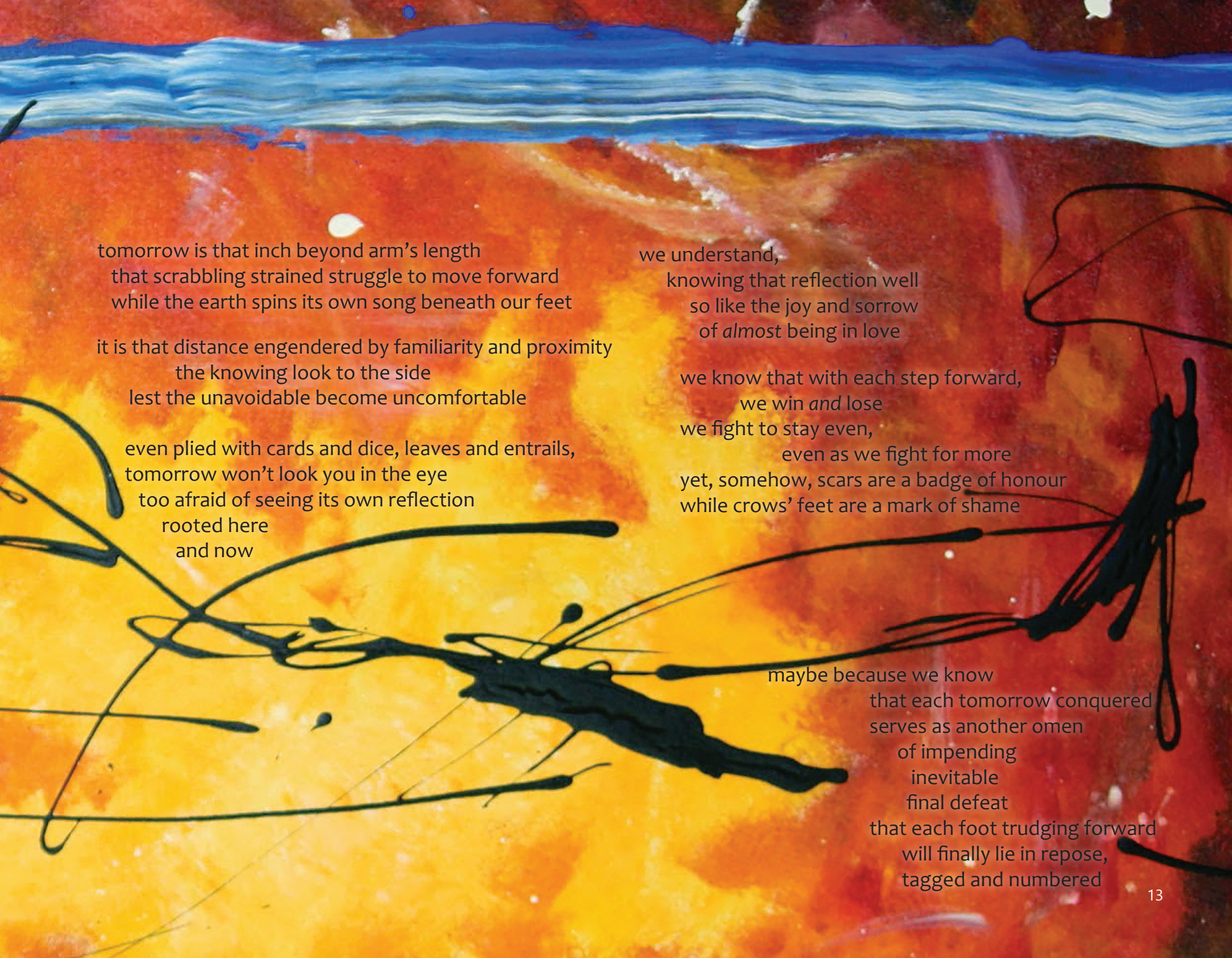


promise tomorrow

tomorrow:
we wait
and reach,
stretching whatever's necessary to get there
a promise *and* a threat

like tomorrow itself —
twenty-four hours journey
to an unknown destination
for unknown reasons,
unknowing reasonings
beckoning with
and warning of
the loss of today

it seems impossible as we try but never close our hands
about that prize
as we are loath to admit time exceeds our grasp



tomorrow is that inch beyond arm's length
that scrabbling strained struggle to move forward
while the earth spins its own song beneath our feet

it is that distance engendered by familiarity and proximity
the knowing look to the side
lest the unavoidable become uncomfortable


even plied with cards and dice, leaves and entrails,
tomorrow won't look you in the eye
too afraid of seeing its own reflection
rooted here
and now

we understand,
knowing that reflection well
so like the joy and sorrow
of *almost* being in love

we know that with each step forward,
we win *and* lose
we fight to stay even,

even as we fight for more
yet, somehow, scars are a badge of honour
while crows' feet are a mark of shame

maybe because we know
that each tomorrow conquered
serves as another omen
of impending
inevitable
final defeat
that each foot trudging forward
will finally lie in repose,
tagged and numbered




it comes like a pornstar
lurks like a vulture
sprouts like a seed
and flies by like the last rest stop
for fifty clicks

still, we welcome tomorrow
if mostly for that midnight moment
of quiet clarity
that anticipation as we approach arrival
when we can revel
and reel in
all regret
when
primeval
possibility
promises
every
desire

we know that when it comes,
it is already gone

and that promise is enough
because, though it may be a day late
and a dollar short,
tomorrow comes



even so, the gravity of its beauty
draws us in
holds us close
until — eventually — we drift

weary but unfettered
stretching truths, dollars, chances
whatever's necessary to get there
reaching:
a promise and a threat

promise:
tomorrow is
all that offers it
all that threatens it

promise tomorrow
that you will greet it with open arms

promise tomorrow to yourself
by living it today.

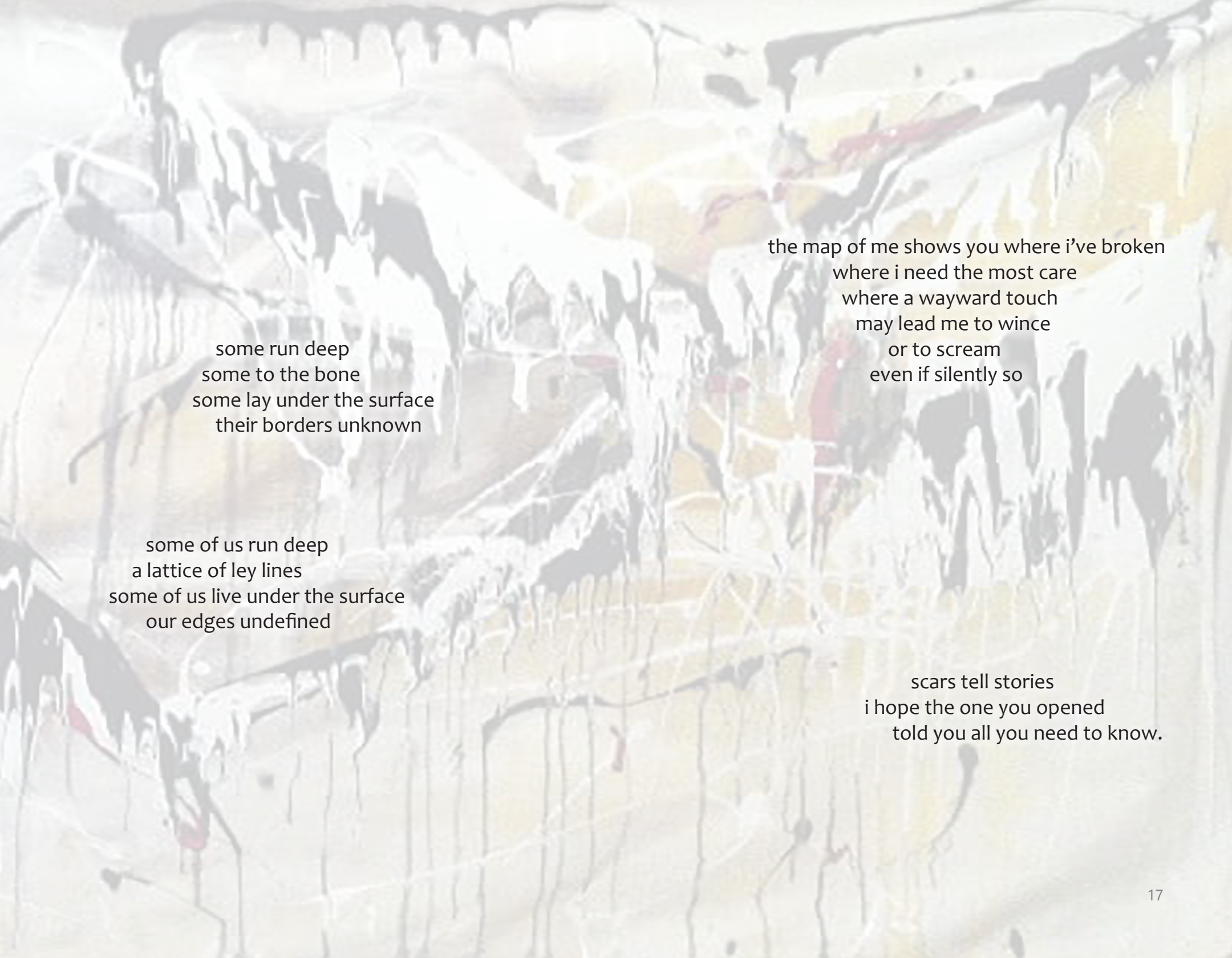


some run deep

read like a turkish coffee cup
our past tells our future

our scars tell stories
the bruises & blemishes are moving pictures
frame after frame
of stacked stillnesses
projected outwards

we walk with the weight of such stories
telling of
the strength of the load
the depth of the vein
the burdens borne
the near-misses
the still-a-triumphs
the discord between muscle and marrow



some run deep
some to the bone
some lay under the surface
their borders unknown

some of us run deep
a lattice of ley lines
some of us live under the surface
our edges undefined

the map of me shows you where i've broken
where i need the most care
where a wayward touch
may lead me to wince
or to scream
even if silently so

scars tell stories
i hope the one you opened
told you all you need to know.



a bagful of dreams

once again, i am considering
introducing the child i once was
to the man i am now
to see what he would think
that boy with the bagful of dreams
ready to sprinkle them on the world
to awaken them

would he be pleased
that none have been abandoned
or would he be appalled
at my atrophy
the product of fighting to live them?

the warnings he would shout
the reprimands
would they exist amidst appreciation
that little has changed
while the world spun madly about me?

would he see me as an icon
cast in stone
or
that ape too afraid to evolve
scampering back to the trees?

and what of the changes too gradual
to have been perceived?
will they bring me to joy
or reduce me to tears
when finally recognized?

mostly, i wonder
whether he would be outraged
that i have not yet let lapse
that most appalling habit:
leaving questions unanswered.

Bohemian Beats

A landscape painting of mountains in mist. The scene is hazy and atmospheric, with soft, muted colors. The mountains are partially obscured by a thick layer of mist or low clouds. The foreground shows a body of water reflecting the light, with some darker, more defined shapes in the distance. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

amphibious

Mountains in Mist

nothing matters
but that moment
between now and then
between here and there
between will and won't

especially when we know we can be in both

always be amphibious
between the wish you cast into the sea
and the ones you pluck from the air

it's there that you'll find it
whatever you've long been looking for

it's not about what's in your grasp
it's how long you'll let your reach be

extend yourself and maybe
you'll find yourself
inbetween your expectations

or maybe not
because maybe
you've never left yourself there.

An abstract painting with splatters of yellow, red, and white. The composition is dominated by large, bold splatters of these colors, creating a sense of movement and energy. The background is a mix of these colors, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall effect is one of spontaneity and expressive brushwork.

canoe

often, we think ourselves adrift
neither recognizing nor revelling
that we still find ourselves
above the waterline

fishing

you will find it
you know this
as sure as you know
that the waiting is work

Teatime

something will change
something will come
if time is sacrificed
on this altar i am

waiting

somehow it shall
somehow it must
because as is
is not yet enough

life and nature
build themselves in change
and movement
so standing still
will eventually get me
someplace else

that sallow second where thought becomes action
— well, it can wait a moment
in the now, i'm waiting on the next instant
with its promise of difference from this one


now can feel so heavy
only in later is there the hope of further lightness
something to change
something to come

adopting the stillness
practiced by predators
must lead to reward
must bring on the difference
i've been waiting for

and if not,
at least biding my time
keeps me sheltered from blame.

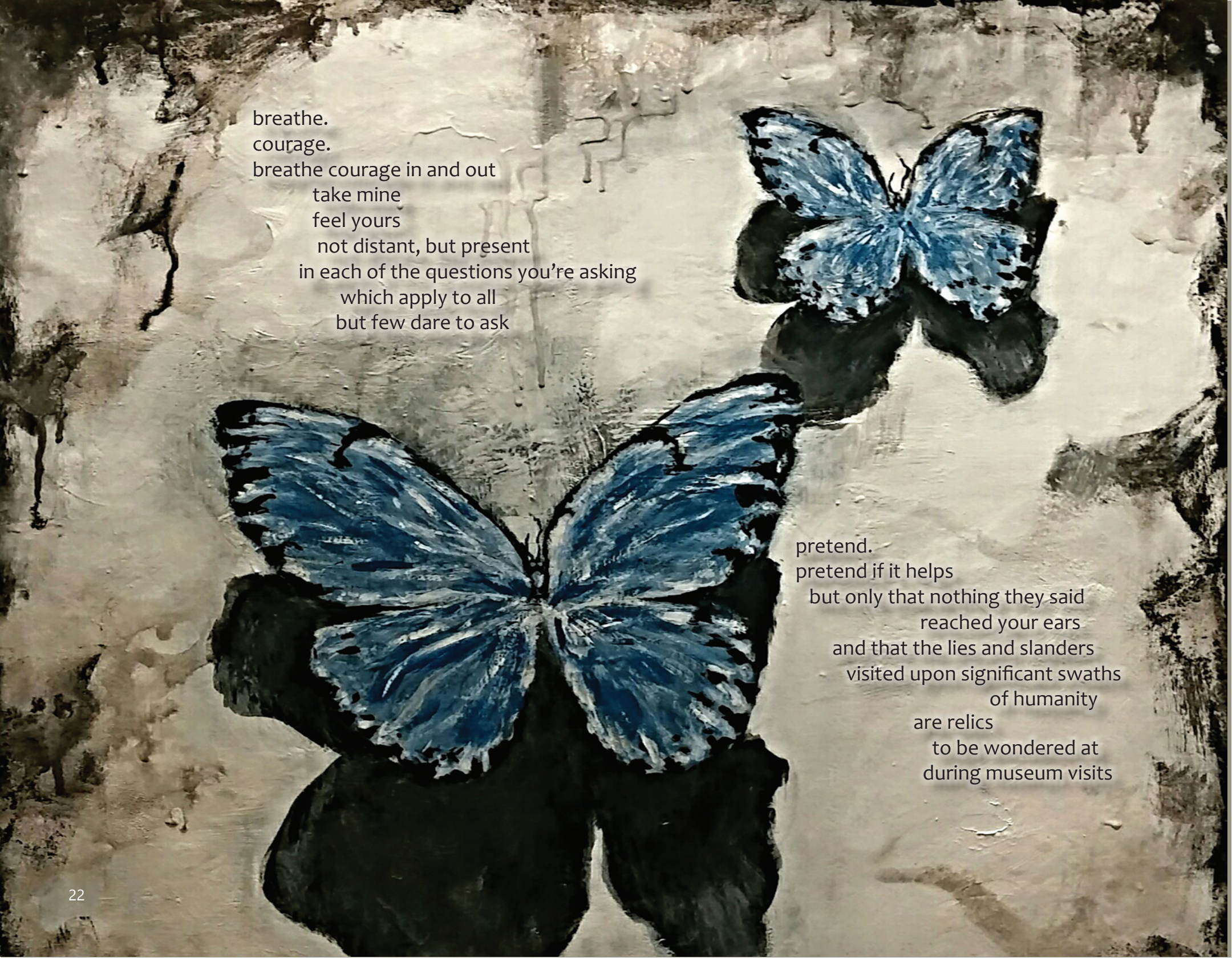
Excitement



The background is a painting of a coastal scene. On the left, a rugged, rocky shoreline is depicted with warm, earthy tones of brown, tan, and white, suggesting wet rocks and foam from crashing waves. The ocean extends from the shore towards the horizon, with varying shades of blue and green. The sky is filled with soft, billowing clouds in shades of white, yellow, and light blue, with a bright, hazy area near the horizon where the sun might be. The overall style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color.

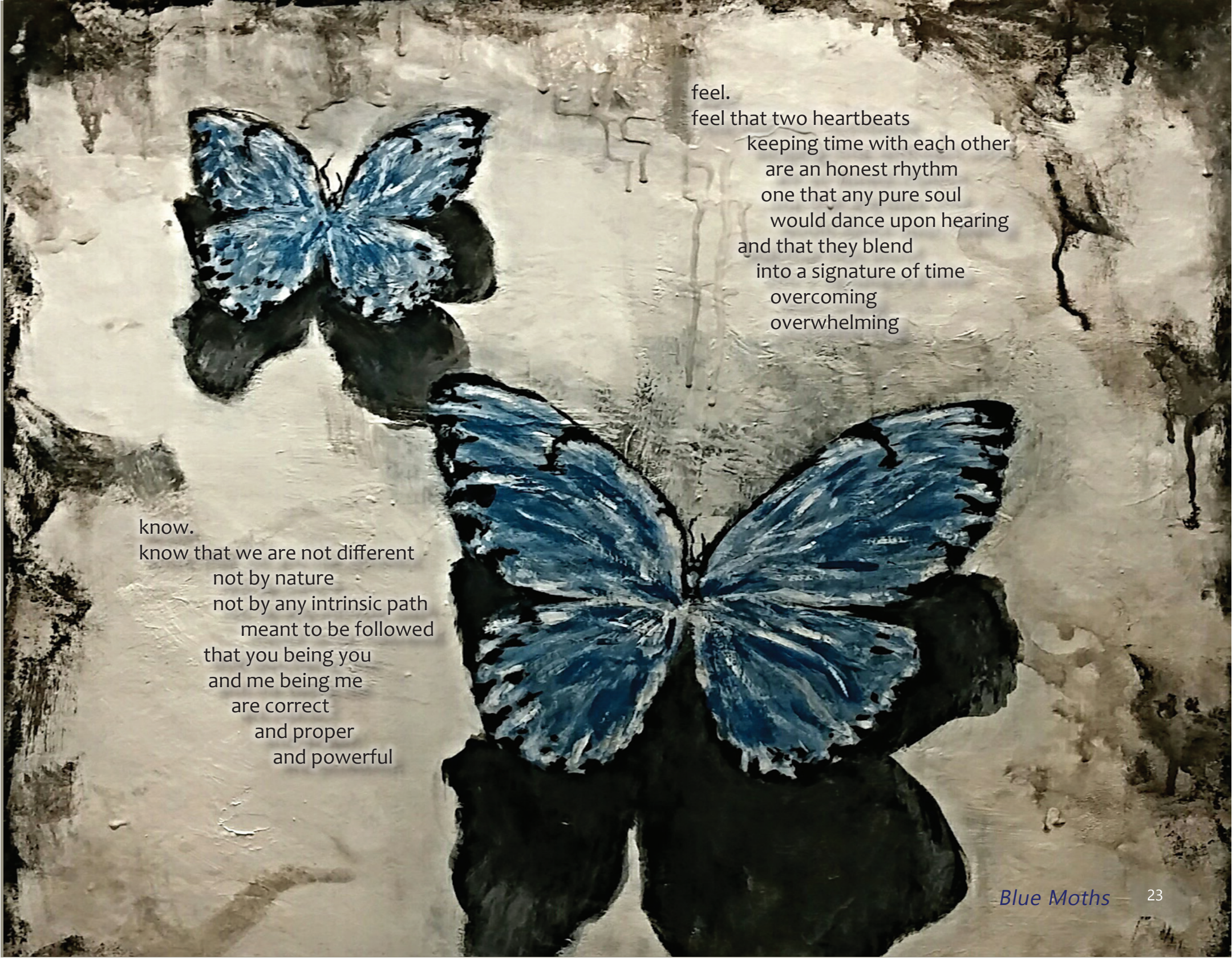
words
to
whisper
through
the
closet
door

Time for Tides

The background is a heavily textured, light-colored surface, possibly a wall or a piece of paper, with dark, irregular shapes that look like shadows or stains. Two blue butterflies are painted on this surface. One butterfly is in the upper right, and the other is in the lower left. Both butterflies have dark blue and black markings on their wings. The text is arranged in two columns, one on the left and one on the right, with the butterflies acting as visual anchors for each column.


breathe.
courage.
breathe courage in and out
take mine
feel yours
not distant, but present
in each of the questions you're asking
which apply to all
but few dare to ask

pretend.
pretend if it helps
but only that nothing they said
reached your ears
and that the lies and slanders
visited upon significant swaths
of humanity
are relics
to be wondered at
during museum visits

The background of the entire page is a textured, light-colored surface, possibly a wall or a piece of paper, with visible brushstrokes and some darker, more textured areas. Two blue moths are depicted. The moth in the upper left is smaller and is shown from a top-down perspective, with its wings spread. The moth in the lower right is larger and is shown from a side-on perspective, with its wings spread. Both moths have a vibrant blue color with dark, almost black, markings on their wings. They are positioned on a dark, shadowed area of the textured surface.

feel.
feel that two heartbeats
keeping time with each other
are an honest rhythm
one that any pure soul
would dance upon hearing
and that they blend
into a signature of time
overcoming
overwhelming

know.
know that we are not different
not by nature
not by any intrinsic path
meant to be followed
that you being you
and me being me
are correct
and proper
and powerful

An abstract oil painting featuring a vibrant palette of blues, teals, and whites, with textured, golden-brown and dark brown accents. The composition is dynamic, with thick brushstrokes and visible layering of paint, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors blend and contrast, forming organic, flowing shapes that evoke a sense of vastness and mystery.

overcome.
overwhelm.
as sure as the light
from dead stars
shines above us
this shining truth
lives within us:


that which hand is clasped
in which hand
which head rests upon
which shoulder
which lips brush
then shudder out sighs
is not
could not
be preordained



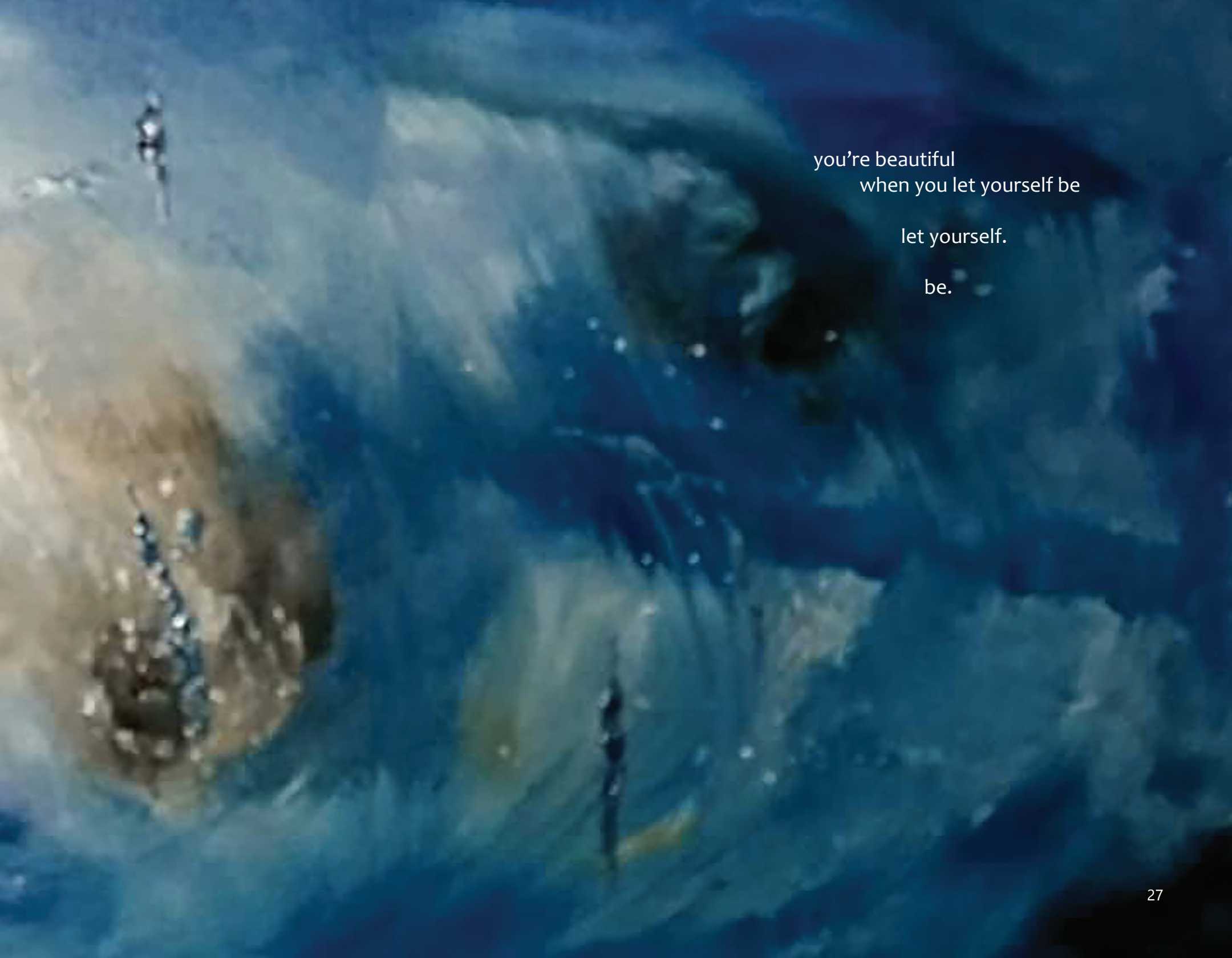
Cavernous

resolve.
resolve to feel yourself
from the inside out
if against me
then for me
for you
regardless of them
because if we hold on
we can let go

hold on.
be with me.
do not wait for our time to come
it is now
it is *always* now
ignore the tyranny of clocks
and similar constructions
measure time
in heartbeats
and breaths
be with me in each
crescendo
descent
silence

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The land is a mix of light brown and tan colors, with some darker patches. A small, dark boat is visible in the water near the shore. A person is standing on the beach, looking out at the water. The water is a deep blue color.

let go.
leave it.
leave it to others
to hang their heads in shame
or to raise them in wonder
but give them reason
by giving yourself freedom

A close-up, slightly blurry photograph of a person's face in water. The person has light skin and dark hair. A diver's mask and snorkel are visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the view. The water is a deep blue color.

you're beautiful
when you let yourself be
let yourself.
be.



tears in their time

the saddest thing is the readiness
however necessary we know it is

the mad dog must be put down
the drowning man who thrashes left to die
the bad seed left to rot

necessity wears a harsh and hardened mask
no matter how sweet and soft
the face beneath

it must
it has no choice
its true face would betray too much
would not see clearly its task
through its tears

tears are a luxury in times of need
they wash away resolve
they sting our eyes and blur our vision
they steal the sustenance we need to live

there will be time for crying
when bellies are full
when children are safe
when elders are extolled
when no hand holds a knife
other than to slice bread for sharing

there will be time for crying
though that time will call for tears of joy
the salt and water of life
flowing freely between us
shared as sacraments
exalted as the sacred things they are

there will be time for crying
after we have found our way through the fire
after we have burned away
the excesses and otherness
after we allow that our edges extend
far beyond the reach of our skin

there will be time for crying
for now, be strong
be ready
be one
and become.

out and in

we can try to enforce the separation
but we know it will never hold
and we feel that inside

there is out

and there is in

as arbitrary as

the separation between them may be
we do not spend our days in doorways
even when the earthquake threatens
we understand portals to be transitory
we move through them with speed
lest they close around us
we do not want to be in-between
and heap scorn on the idea of a life in limbo

what is out

will come in

and what is in


will break out

there are always cracks and breaks to be exploited
gaps in the lines and definitions
we'd thought we'd cemented
any contractor can tell you that no seal is perfect
time will whittle away at everything
it is the universal solvent
rotting away any barrier we build

eventually, if we go in

we know we need to go out
the amphibious drive behind our nature
prevents either from being enough
the continuous thriving of all things
requires movement
and any shift will lead eventually
from one state to another

every entryway is a hole
so why would the opposite not hold true?
ingress is always inviting
and escape is always enticing
if you don't believe so
see how long you can keep your mouth shut



that whisper of the wind
leaking into your living room
inevitable insects and recalcitrant rodents
condensation, moisture, and fog
that scraggly weed sprouting
where the asphalt gave way
those words you never meant to say
that thought you'd thought had been thrown away

these will get in
these will leak out

every boundary will someday give way
so hedging your bets on building walls
is futile
and foolish
trying to turn the tide of the transitory
is a waste of your days
better to open the gates
and let all flow in either direction

accept the ability to access any of it
affirm that anything can access you
welcome it all in
let it all out
and know
that the open doorway is the key.

nothing and no one

castles in the air are bound to fall
those on the ground will decay or be razed
and no one wants to know

still, you must tell the builders
shout it into their ears
as they cement each stone into its place
and whisper it to their orphans
however cruel it seems

because legacies outlast any layer that might be laid
and as those tumble or crumble or give
what lay behind them all is exposed

when we weep for the walls alone
we strip them of meaning
we hold fast to dust returning to dust
rather than to the spark which let it live

in doing so, we reject life itself

and what then would the walls shelter?
just the trappings and detritus
those things that say
someone *used* to be here
— if anyone is left to listen

those artifacts, however accidental
pretending at meaning
mean nothing but pretence
nothing compared to those who carved them
nothing compared to those
who feel them inscribed in their being
nothing without us creating them
or being created through them

let nothing stop with you
— for a while
let it find some shade of shelter
and become something more
let it give itself to the future
as a full promise to be filled

for the time will come
when no one stands in your way
when no one stands in your shadow
when you are gone
— *no one* —
and if nothing remains
no one will know.





different floors

we work on different floors
but it's the same building

so i'm sharing an elevator with this
make-believe model and
she thinks she can scrawl her fashion fantasies
all over
my mind
my body
my libido
(she's wrong)

to her, i know how i come off —
it's written in that sidelong
skipping-stone glance
that rides quickly up to the floor indicator

to her, i'm just a mystery wrapped in an enigma
wrapped in clothes that aren't from gaulthier
— with facial hair

how did she get tangled so tightly
in that web of wanna-be
believing paris dictates personality
that glossy magazines are catalogues of self
that people mean more
with other people's names attached

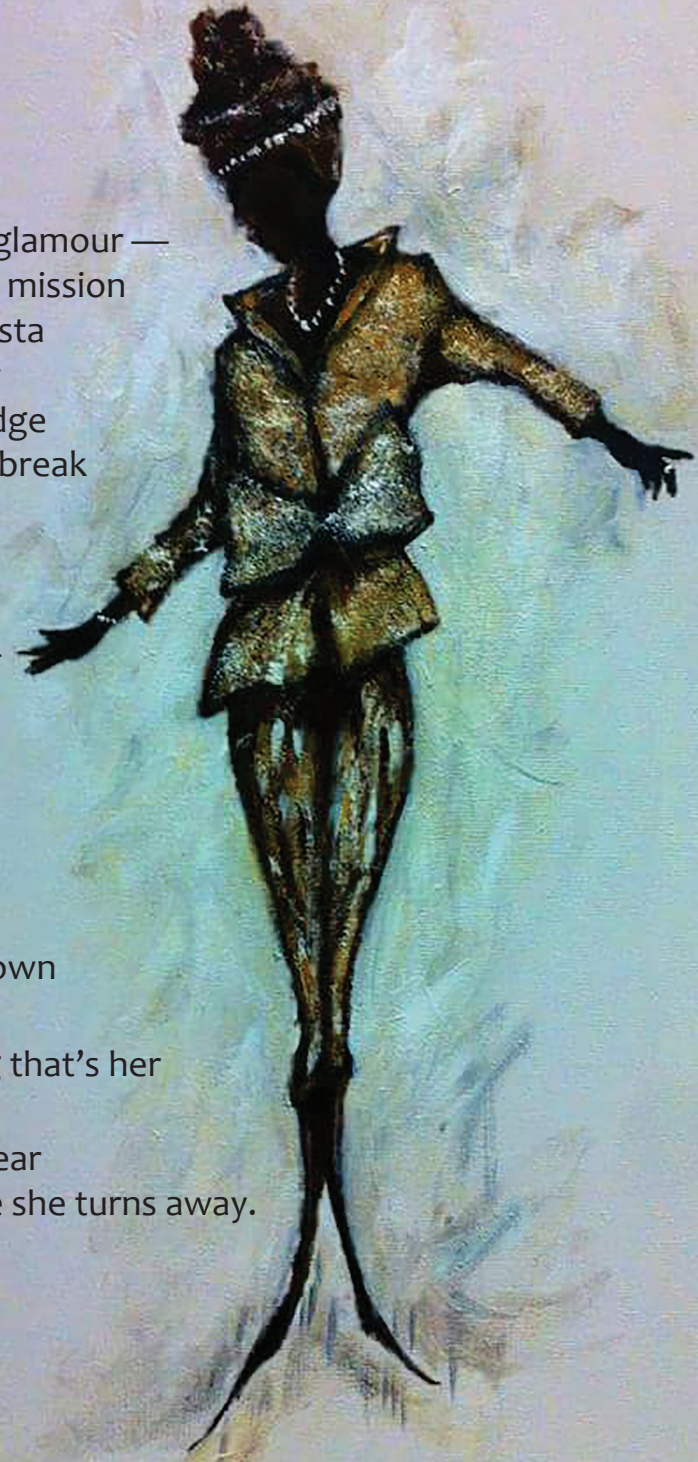
it's not just the fame and glamour —
she's on a mission
she's a television evangelista
serving up sitcom fantasy
but refusing to hit the fridge
at the commercial break

she's stereotype —
self-proclaimed archetype —
polished,
practiced,
precise

not a word,
not a step,
not a move of her own

i can't see anything that's her

excepting the fear
each time she turns away.







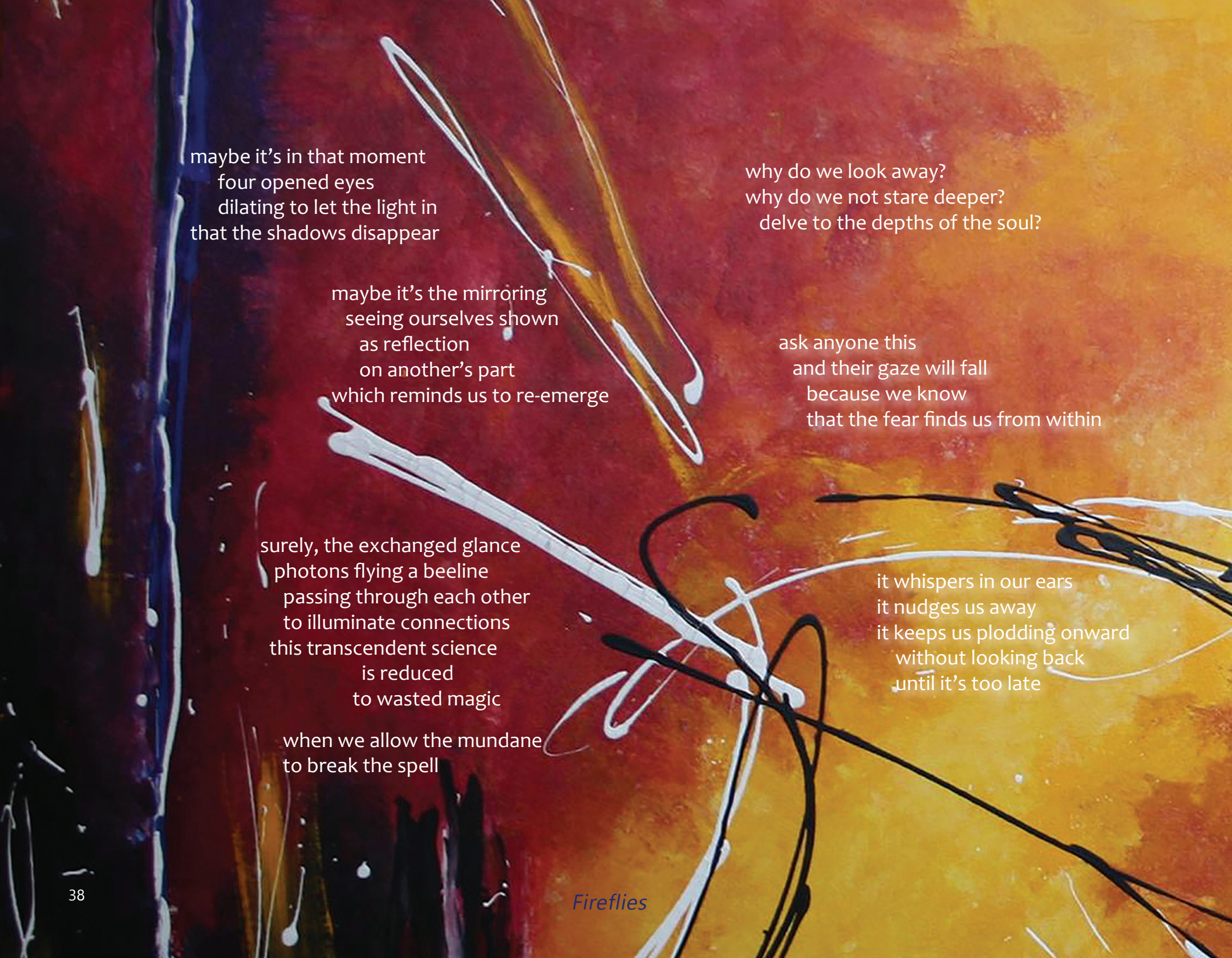
wasted magic

the problem with love at first sight
is the second thoughts

because
though we can lock eyes
and see who each other is
in an instant
only time can tell us
whether we're willing to live up to that

perhaps those perfect people
as first spotted
unblemished by the scars
inflicted from outside
could live up to that promise of passion

perhaps they,
undaunted by the daily drudgeries
of fears steering us in circles
could stand up strong
and surrender



maybe it's in that moment
four opened eyes
dilating to let the light in
that the shadows disappear

maybe it's the mirroring
seeing ourselves shown
as reflection
on another's part
which reminds us to re-emerge


surely, the exchanged glance
photons flying a beeline
passing through each other
to illuminate connections
this transcendent science
is reduced
to wasted magic

when we allow the mundane
to break the spell

why do we look away?
why do we not stare deeper?
delve to the depths of the soul?

ask anyone this
and their gaze will fall
because we know
that the fear finds us from within

it whispers in our ears
it nudges us away
it keeps us plodding onward
without looking back
until it's too late

The background is an abstract painting with warm, textured tones of orange, red, and yellow. Overlaid on this are expressive, gestural lines in black and white, some of which form loops and swirls, suggesting movement and complexity.

resolve to look a stranger in the eyes
honestly, without shame
and feel those demons stir within
all those broken parts
shifting to form a protective shell
around that black hole
built of loss and regret
whose gravity

pulls our eyes
to the ground

pulls our step
towards tomorrow

pulls
the chance
of believing in
being bigger than ourselves
away

wasted magic
piles at our feet
becomes the spur
to avoid the spark
so we won't have to
watch it dim
a pointless worry
if we allow the world
to blacken around us

incantations unfinished
open doors to darknesses
despite it being a simple matter
to let the sorcery have its say

despite that we know
all we need
is to be alive
to believe
and to be,
without the lie.

the opposite of fear

the opposite of fear
is the fingers of two hands entwining
in knowledge of each other

the opposite of fear
is an accidental brush in passing
that evokes a smile

the opposite of fear
is a distant whisper
understood by its tone alone

there is safety in most things
that bring comfort
but not love
love is a minefield
where each successful step
is rewarded with exhilaration
as the heart quickens
knowing all is risked at every moment


as such, it cannot be given lightly
hold fast to it
love is not meant for cowards
and your strength shows
when you look it in the eye
— honestly —
because truth is bravery
and lies at its foundation

and it
is our foundation
our stories
our histories
our fictions
our songs
these dance on the bedrock of love
they rise from it
in majestic structures like the taj mahal

we want to rise
we want to be greater than one
because we know we are

we know
we are not solitary
we are not alone
we are not bound by
the borders of our bodies

*Lynn Canyon
Suspension Bridge*

A high-angle, first-person perspective looking down a long, narrow wooden suspension bridge. The bridge is made of many parallel wooden planks and is surrounded by a dense, lush green forest. The bridge's cables and supports are visible on either side. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, with sunlight filtering through the trees.

all it takes
is that single step
into
the
minefield

all it takes
is taking on that risk
with a smile

all it takes
is feeling the beat
of our own hearts
to let them share their rhythms
with another

all it takes
is being more than ourselves
as we know
we are ready to be.

friends of mine have been hit hard
by a dynamic expressed generally in generalities
they're dismissed in a stroke
by virtue of their race, gender, and sexuality

in fact, i've seen many so cowed
that they've even joined in

i find myself unable to hold back any longer
so i am here to plead to you today
in defence of the straight white male

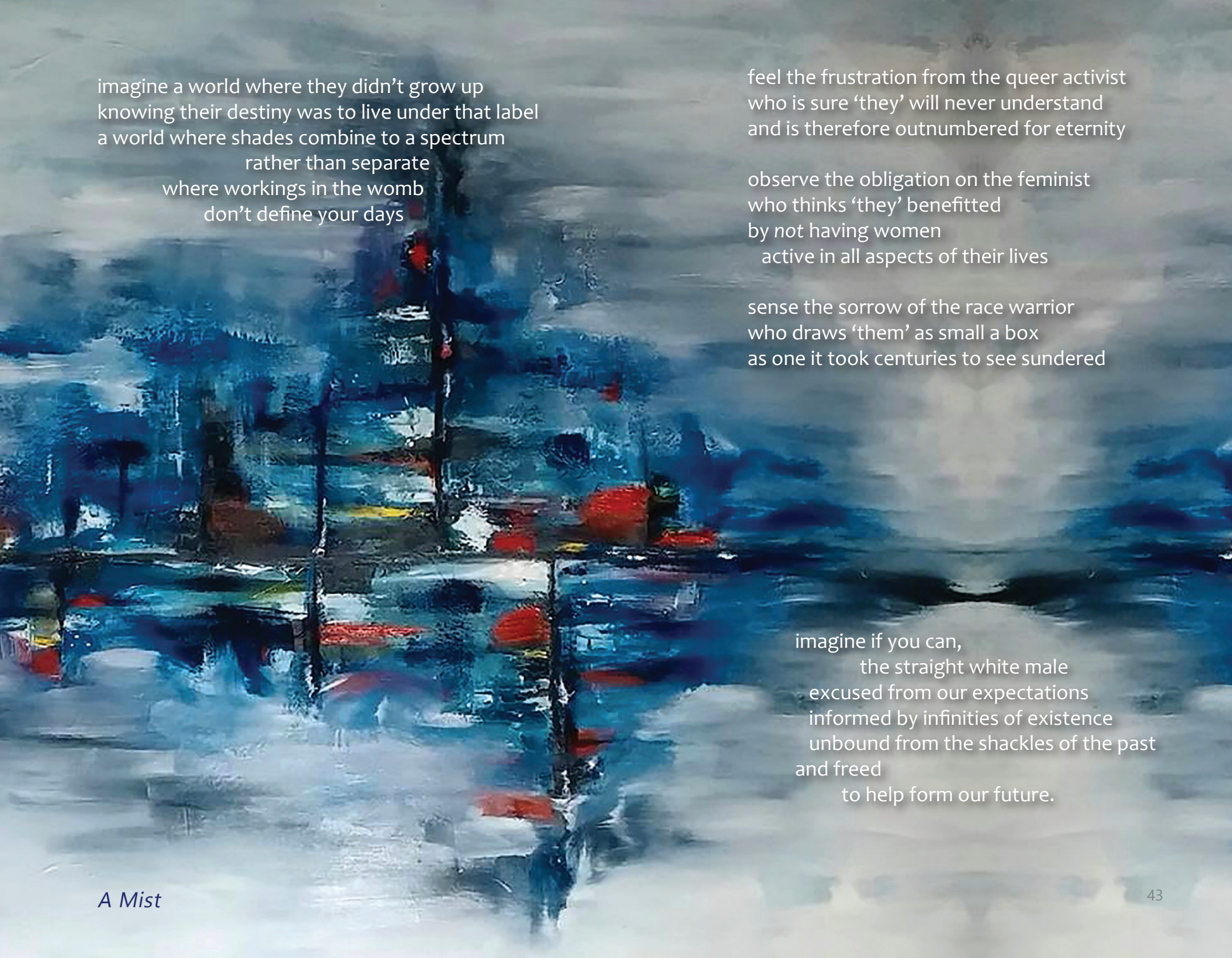
one stereotype perpetuates another
and so i ask you, one and all
to reconsider this figure

pity these poor creatures
for ages now, most have suffered from a lack
of strong, empowered women in their lives
of the wisdom of innumerable cultures
of reason to redefine their sexuality and gender
— on their own terms

they have no mohandas gandhi
no martin luther king
no laura secord
no chief seattle
no oscar wilde
no george sands
no billie holiday
no boodica

ask yourself whether the will of the majority
is something you'd ever want ascribed to yourself
or if you could ever truly learn history
if it meant bearing the weight of its guilt

how much harder must it be
to expand your horizons
when only given the breadth
of being the defining point
for butch
or tanned
or queer?



imagine a world where they didn't grow up
knowing their destiny was to live under that label
a world where shades combine to a spectrum
rather than separate
where workings in the womb
don't define your days

feel the frustration from the queer activist
who is sure 'they' will never understand
and is therefore outnumbered for eternity

observe the obligation on the feminist
who thinks 'they' benefitted
by not having women
active in all aspects of their lives

sense the sorrow of the race warrior
who draws 'them' as small a box
as one it took centuries to see sundered

imagine if you can,
the straight white male
excused from our expectations
informed by infinities of existence
unbound from the shackles of the past
and freed
to help form our future.



Beats

the duck

outside the library,
people sit on the steps
some reading
some eating
some smoking
some taking the sun

a duck
scrounges for food

on various stairs,
empty stare
after empty stare
registers
duck
and nothing more

he approaches me, no fear
plucking at wilted lettuce
one step below my feet
to demonstrate his need

i throw him a look that says
duck, if i had some...

he shrugs, winks, and continues
going down three steps
before passing the woman parallel
who only takes notice when he slips
falls

he dives back up
to avoid the two smoking further down
no fear of the cigarette
mine gave him no pause

the duck circles
watching a man eat
a triple-decker jelly sandwich
while smoking
oblivious that food
looks good to those that hunger

the duck shakes his head
circles again
running up the upper walkway
chased by a teenage girl
above her head, cartoon-like
i see the whole of her thoughts:
duck!

she leaves
and he settles back beside me
hoping for agreement on the state
of this motley crew
before pausing to watch a man
wheel a dog by
in a shopping cart

the dog is afraid
— not of the cart —
but of what lies outside
of that small mercy
the duck seems envious

i throw him a look that says
duck, if i had one...

he seems to snicker and sigh
in a way that says
 if you did, pal,
 i'd ride
 if you did,
 i'd ride.



child with a kite

the child with a kite
is sheathed in corona
as the sun blazes down to day's end

a flight of rainbow
cleaves through the blue
and the gulls sing approval

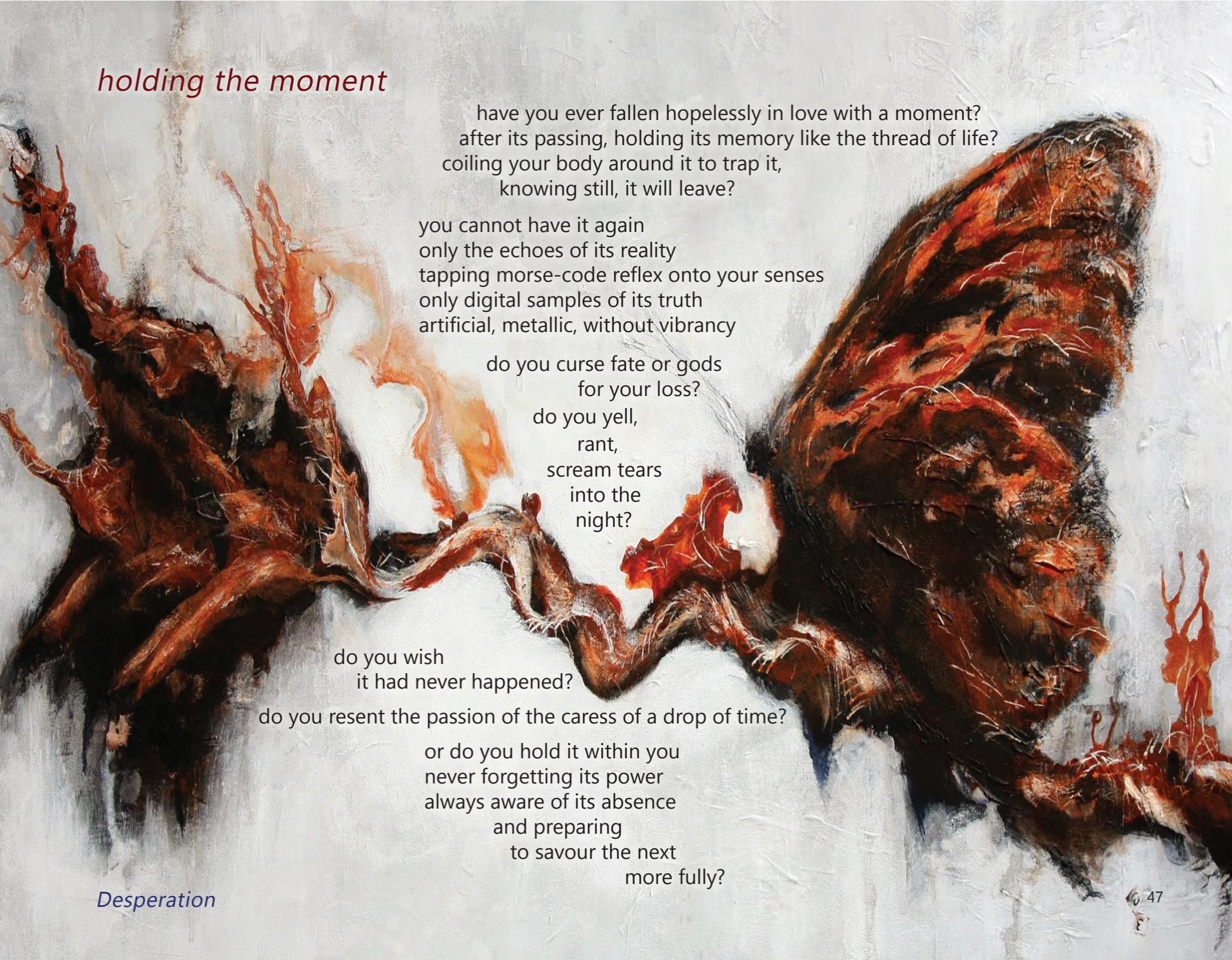
her joy is written across the clouds
and in spray of sand
from wayward feet

she is a silhouette
an unformed memory
of being one with the world

hand clenched on string
she dances between
earth and sky

the rest of us
need only turn and watch
to hear the music
and remember how to fly.

Sunset



holding the moment

have you ever fallen hopelessly in love with a moment?
after its passing, holding its memory like the thread of life?
coiling your body around it to trap it,
knowing still, it will leave?

you cannot have it again
only the echoes of its reality
tapping morse-code reflex onto your senses
only digital samples of its truth
artificial, metallic, without vibrancy

do you curse fate or gods
for your loss?

do you yell,
rant,
scream tears
into the
night?

do you wish
it had never happened?

do you resent the passion of the caress of a drop of time?

or do you hold it within you
never forgetting its power
always aware of its absence
and preparing
to savour the next
more fully?

Desperation

the sweep of time and tide

the tide has a rhythm
sure, maybe that of the sloppy drummer
who speeds and slows in the moment
but it's live, it's living

not like the artificial ticks of the clock
we pretend is the pace of time
those pointed hands are accusatory
they shift blame in a constant circle

the lapping of waves heals us
soothes our senses
while the insistence of the second hand
we recognize as the sound
of impending madness

both are sweeping lines
carrying us forward
maybe to new shores and new days
perhaps from ancient paths and old ways

but we can choose whether our way
is written
in the curves and bends of welcoming beaches
or in the arrows aiming everywhere but away

the direction suggested by those
never-resting appendages
is no greater a distance
than the ocean origin of that whitecap

neither will be reached casually
neither is within our grasp
neither is within a day's journey
or this side of the skyline

we only see the thin edge of their expanse
but one is always the same
even as it changes
while the other is infinite variety
in its repetition

endless grains swept to distant shores are we
and where we rest defines us only in the moment
however horizons look upon us
it is always with a sweeping smile
and the knowledge
that tomorrow and yesterday
look the same on the surface
despite their myriad variations

time has its own measure
one far beyond us
but one that riffs to the rhythms around us
those that pre-date us
reaching back deep
those we often forget
when falsely favouring the shallows
of mechanical meters

we fall out of time
thinking of those shorelines as remote
thinking of our actions as driven
by the grinding of gears and wheels
telling ourselves we don't feel
the pull and push
of invisible forces
and letting all our chances tick away.



dig out

contrary to what some might say
you *can* dig your way out of a hole

it takes a sculptor's eye
to cast a glance at a wall of earth
and spy the staircase buried within

it takes time and effort
 patience and precision
to carve each step
so that it will hold you
 without crumbling beneath

and there will be the false steps
 there will be those barred by stones
 there will be roots and tangles
but no one moves towards the sky simply
 without sacrifice

muscles will strain
 sinews will falter
a moment taken for breath
 will exhale inertia

but dig on
intuit that shape which will lift you upward
shape the dirt that surrounds you into it

do not surrender
 however exhausted
the future you want is always the tougher journey

but dig out
 however hardscrabble the work
 however high the goal may seem
because you *can't* stay where you are



the earth might be moving
much too fast for you to keep up
but if you choose your direction well
it'll all come back to you

you can dig your way out of a hole
and if you do it right
you leave a path for others to follow
sparing them the struggle

look around you and see the signs
how much has been overcome
in ways that still lift you higher
in ways that still will
— if you let them —
show you the way out.



danger

there are constants
in nature
in time
in human existence
and danger
is chief among them

but it's the same as with warfare
the scope changes
with advances in delivery systems

when knives evolve to bombs
and whips to wages
the aggressor's prize is no longer
a glint of fear in an eye

instead,
it is resignation in a footfall
a conversation in a coffeehouse
with a tremor in the voice
a cigarette pulled from the lips
in anxious frustration
a bottle drained to speed the clock
fingers dancing on a remote control
fat and sugar fondled by a fork

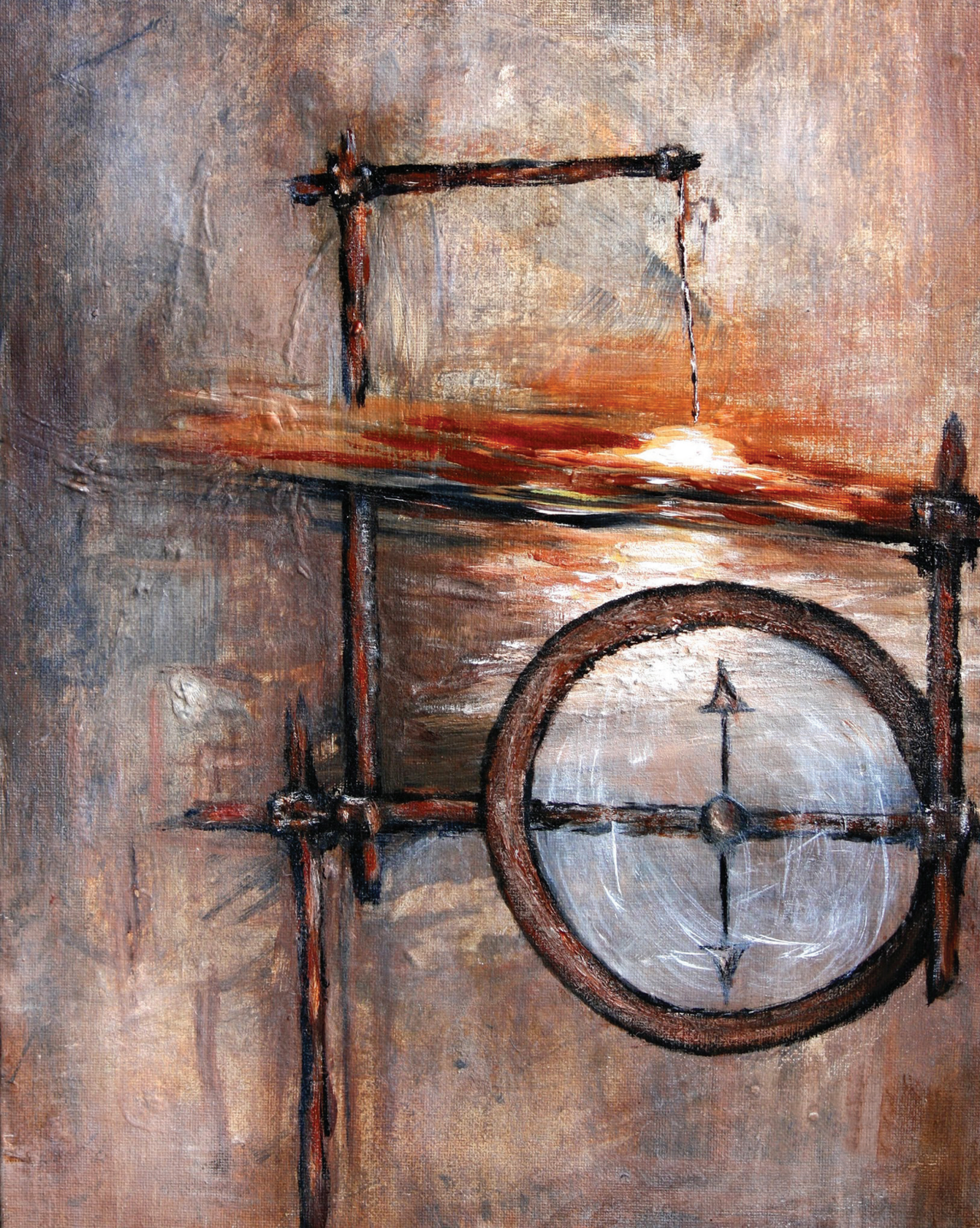
damocles had it easy
solely one sword to suffer
whose point drove deeper
before breaking skin

we have missiles never seen
the final paycheque
paper bullets in window envelopes
disease driving through wind and bodily fluids
someone else's need to be there faster
mechanical marvels' myriad meltdowns
corporate need to grow
free of remorse or regret

we talk, hear, see, and know
more of danger
than hope
or joy
or love

but if this is how we choose to live
maybe
we have nothing left to fear.

*humanity 101:
final exam*



Misdirection in Time

question one:
close your eyes.
assume we're on the phone.
assume i'm white.
what difference does it make?
does anything betray me?
are the paradigms i fit more comfortable
in this frame of reference? how so?
include at least four examples from your past.





question two:
cover your ears.
assume we have just met in the street.
assume you have correctly guessed my religion.
what do you hold back?
do you ask anything you wouldn't otherwise?
are you hoping to learn something
or just shielding your own opinions? why?
include at least three preconceptions you admit.

question three:
smile slyly.
assume we're at a bar.
assume i'm straight.
what are your motives?
do you buy me a drink?
is your body language just different
or absent? in what way?
include at least two mistakes you have made.





question four:
assume we're strangers,
assuming nothing.
what do we discuss?
is eye contact comfortable?
are the things left unsaid
your loss or mine?
include at least one reason i should care.



question five:
open your eyes.
uncover your ears.
wipe that smirk off your face.
who else is around?
can they see you?
what are the assumptions they're making
about you right now?
include your odds of escaping predefinition.




Ocean's Trend

you will be graded on your economy of language.
you will be graded on your presentation.
you will be graded on your reasoning and associations.
you will be graded on your performance
relative to those around you.



you have until death to finish this test.
you have been provided with all supplies necessary.



Cool Mornings

begin now.

good luck.



Decent Descents

About the Authors

When **KYLE HAWKE** was 5 and visiting India for the first time, his grandfather's circle of activist and theologian friends told him he should be a writer. That became the one expectation on him he held fast to.

Kyle has been performing spoken word since the 1990s. Preferring to perform with musicians and painters, he founded the Voice on Canvas and Bohemian Caress reading series, both of which saw performance poetry, improvised music, and live painting concurrently on stage. He's also been active with various literary non-profit groups.

Themes of identity, universality, and the moment figure significantly in Kyle's work. Working in juxtaposition with other artforms has always fascinated him, leading to many ekphrastic poems and many performances with painters and musicians. He feels that having multiple voices speak to a theme or comment on each other adds focus on what is universal, adding new context to each voice.

whispers of humanity is Kyle's first collection of poetry in book form. He lives in Vancouver, BC.

A prolific creator, **WADE EDWARDS** aims to examine every vantage offered by human variation. Self-taught but inspired by artists as diverse as da Vinci, Monet, and Wilson Bickford, his work explores abstract and impressionist themes through constantly shifting and evolving techniques as suits the moment and subject.

Wade has shown his work from coast to coast. He was a partner in the Avenue Gallery, the feature in-store painter for the Davie Art Shop, a regular live painter for the Bohemian Caress series, and winner of a national competition which saw his work displayed on advertising boards nationally.

Having come to the canvas later in life than many, Wade develops his own techniques as he goes. While respecting formal structures and approaches, he feels most comfortable letting his brushes be his eyes and throwing himself whole into the work. He looks forward to exploring new forms and techniques as opportunity is sparked by chance or spurred by the muses.

whispers of humanity is Wade's first published collection of paintings. He lives in Vancouver, BC.



Dusk