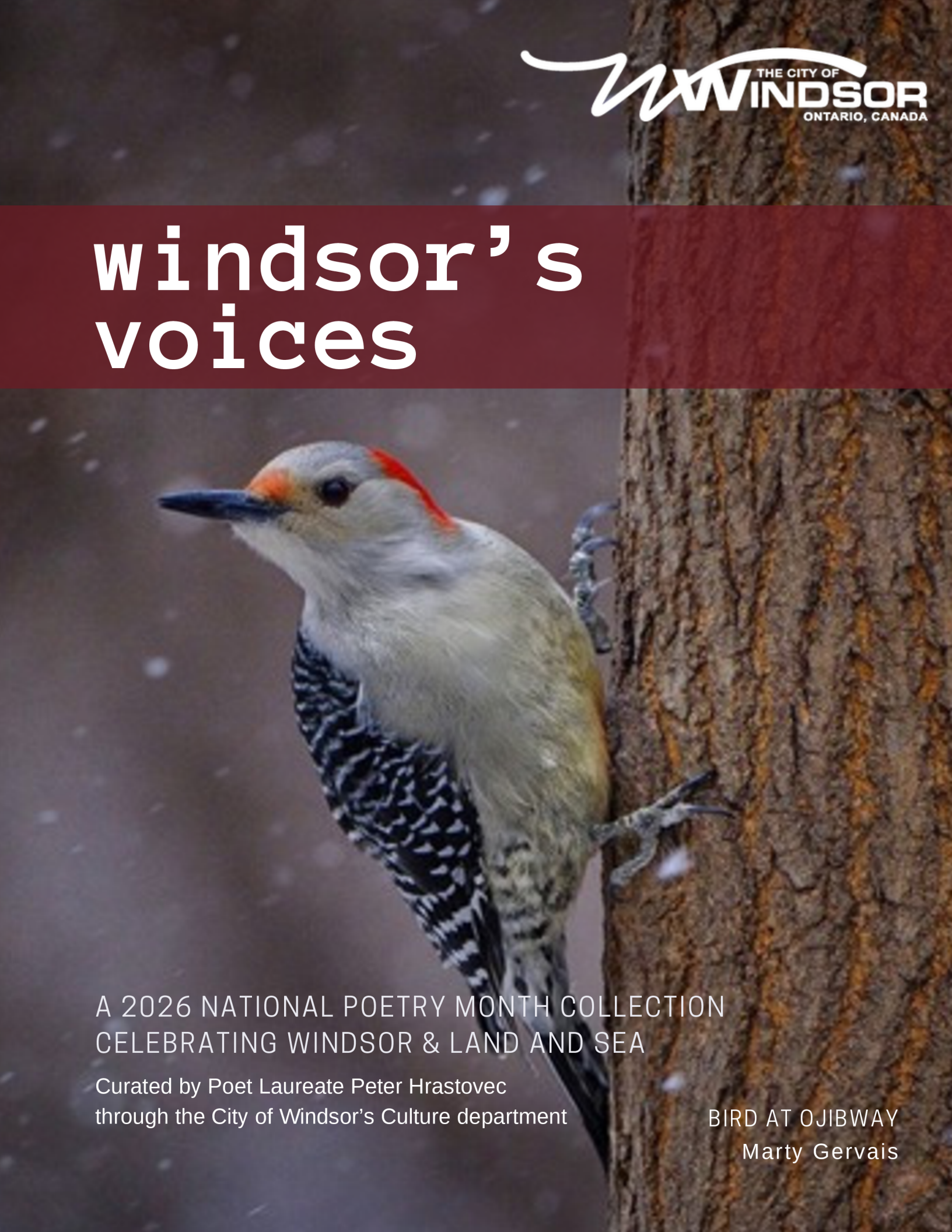
THE CITY OF WINDSOR
ONTARIO, CANADA

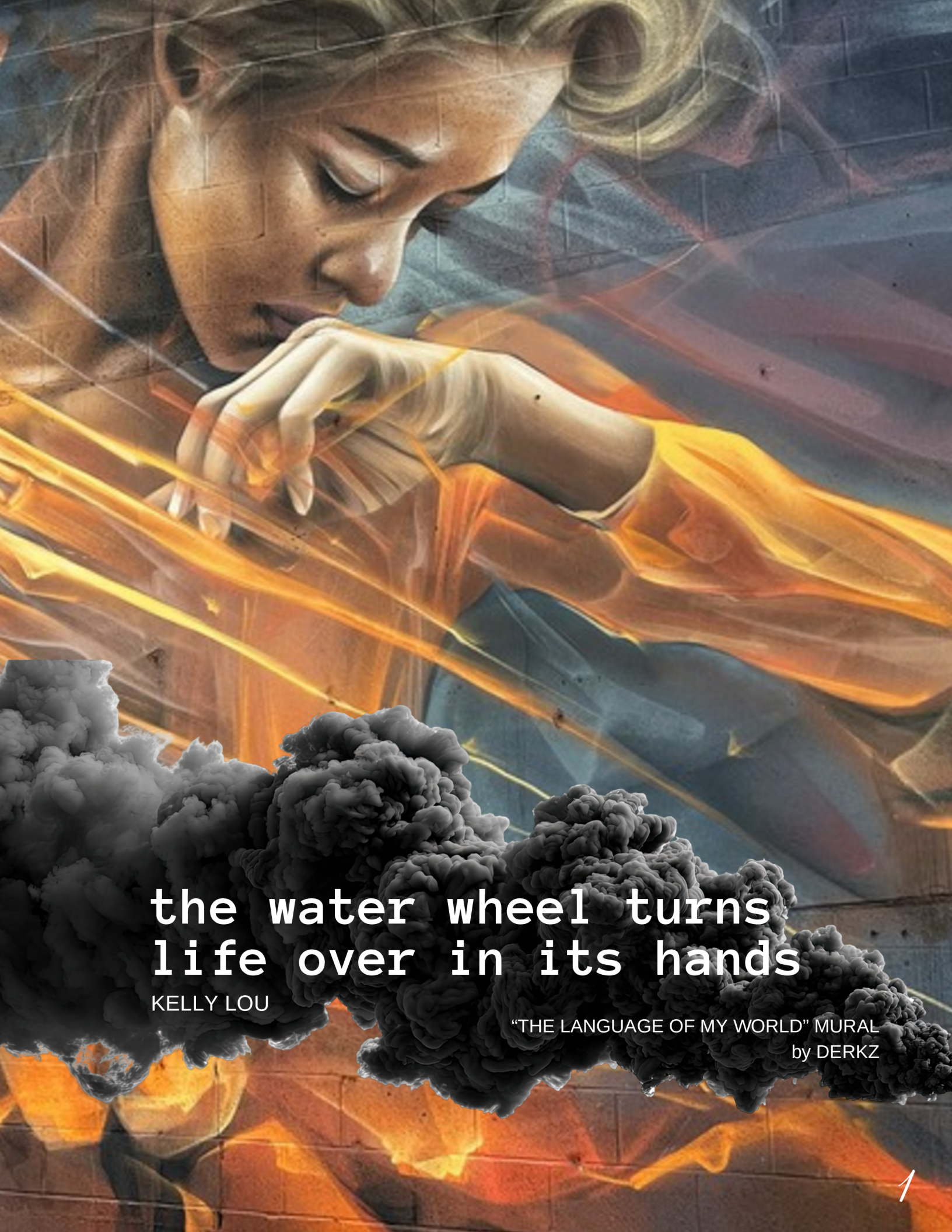
windsor's voices



A 2026 NATIONAL POETRY MONTH COLLECTION
CELEBRATING WINDSOR & LAND AND SEA

Curated by Poet Laureate Peter Hrastovec
through the City of Windsor's Culture department

BIRD AT OJIBWAY
Marty Gervais



the water wheel turns life over in its hands

KELLY LOU

"THE LANGUAGE OF MY WORLD" MURAL
by DERKZ

Here we are again...

Our **“Windsor’s Voices”** initiative returns to bring poetry to the community in an innovative way as part of National Poetry Month 2026.

Windsor poets and photographers of all ages were invited to submit original poems or photos on one of two themes: what Windsor means to you, and Land & Sea - the League of Canadian Poets’ 2026 theme for National Poetry Month.

This collection of creative works celebrates the neighbourhoods, landmarks, places, spaces, experiences, thoughts and inspirations that all reflect on what makes Windsor special. Through this initiative, we continue to promote poetry to an appreciative audience while strengthening the public’s relationship to poetry and the creative arts. **We hope that you enjoy these works.**

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*Cover Photo - Bird at Ojibway, Marty Gervais
*First Page Photo - The Language of My World Mural

LANGUAGE OF A CITY

Unknown words reach ears, whispers of syllables push thoughts to beat rhythms on my eardrums, trying to convey meaning that I can’t understand.

On the tip of the tongue, dreams of words ushered to mind. My teacher smiling softly with paper in hand. Explain this word, please.

Down humid city streets more words raindrop, streaking down skin, melting paper-thin yesterdays. I know this one. It runs in my veins, thickened blood waterlogged with new.

I can remember, but all that's left are the burn marks under dried wax. Scrape it off, please.

Their skin like endless summers, eyes like far seas, seasons hinted in white hair.

The past clinging faintly, bolstering love letters of crossed seas passed down life in a language.

I remember the car window finger-streaked afternoon sunlight on sleeping faces.

RACHAEL CASAGRANDE

Dolma,

The kitchen counter exudes a proliferating scent, boiled water

Seeps into honey onion rice grenades,

blessing the tips of our tongues in sour hot sweetness.

The same water

That evaporates, paints a maroon sky, rain pour

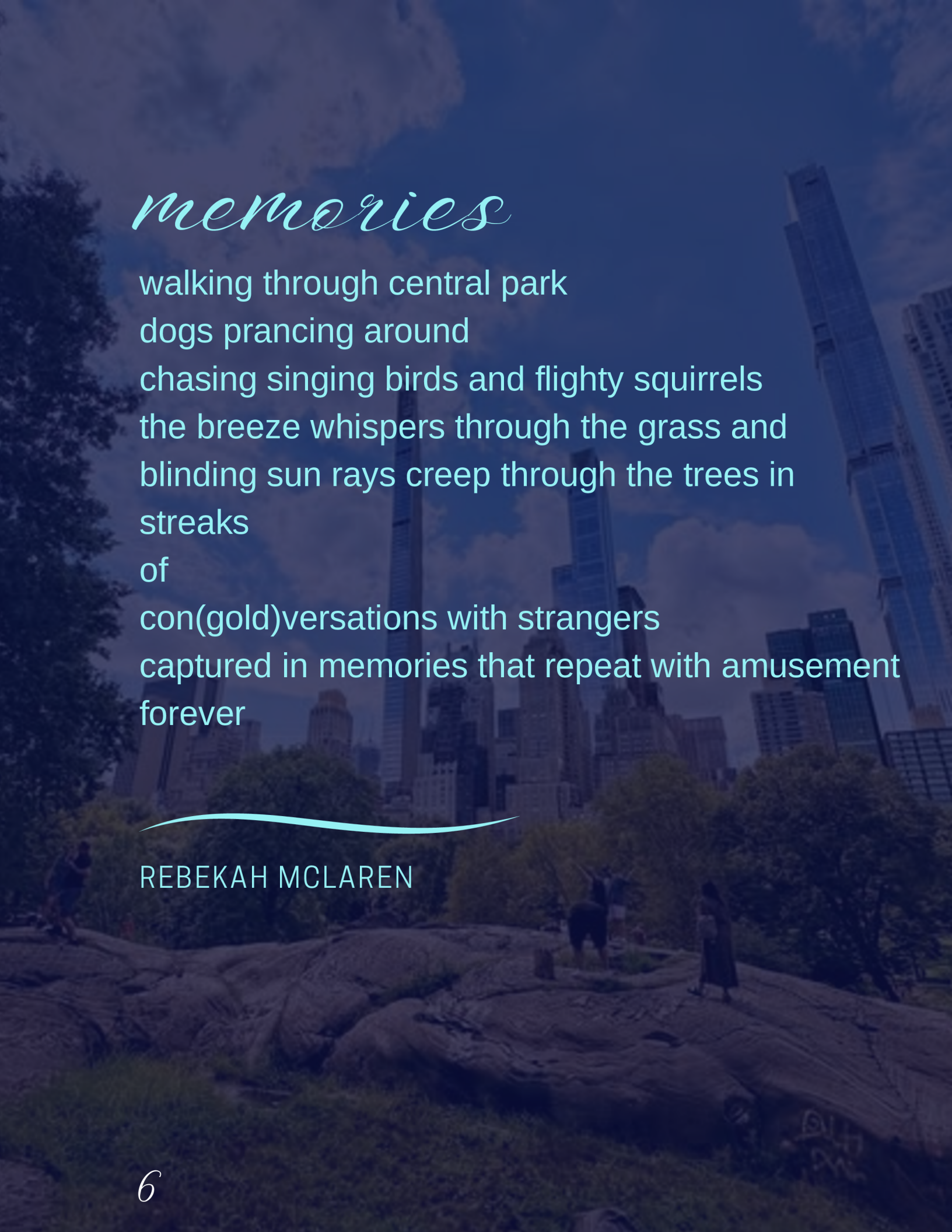
Kisses Lake Erie like a pulsating heart, water

Melts into barren salt mines,

Marinates the webs of calloused fingertips, water,

Home.

TINA BARAYA



memories

walking through central park
dogs prancing around
chasing singing birds and flighty squirrels
the breeze whispers through the grass and
blinding sun rays creep through the trees in
streaks
of
con(gold)versations with strangers
captured in memories that repeat with amusement
forever

REBEKAH MCLAREN

Along the Riverside

The edge is struck by glistening waves
as the sun submerges,
the water is cast with warm hues.
Wings flutter. Seagulls Squawk!
elephants captured – time still – with stone
Land painted with jade and growth
up high, borders connect through an aged bridge
Shoes striding on endless pavement
with buildings in view across the blue.

SUMAIRA AHMED



Water Flows Time

The life we savour,
slick and slipping off pebbles
that line freshwater shores,
sticks to waxy roof tiles
while below, seeds crack
from their shelled embrace
and mature the soils of time.

The water wheel turns
life over in its hands.

KELLY LOU



CITY HALL SQUARE

Courtesy of the City of Windsor



Automotive Pizza

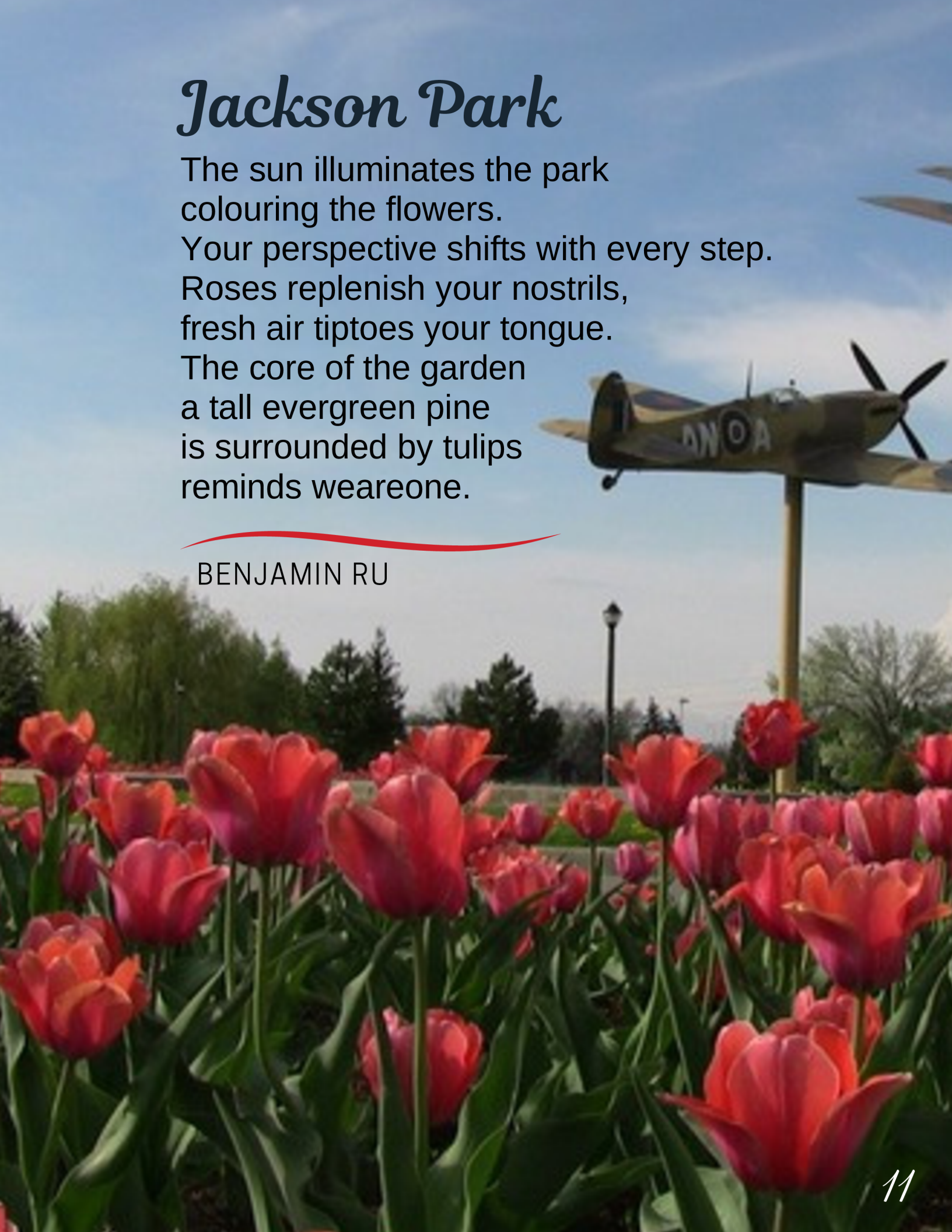
Metal hammers the Chrysler assembly line,
Engines thunder beside the Detroit River.
But when the shifts end,
Stone ovens glow in the back of pizza shops,
Shredded pepperoni crisps at the edges,
Galati mozzarella turns golden brown.
Hands spin dough like another kind of wheel,
Another kind of assembly line — only warmer.
Sweet oregano perfume drifts around the corner,
Reminding you that you're home.

SUMMER LU

Jackson Park

The sun illuminates the park
colouring the flowers.
Your perspective shifts with every step.
Roses replenish your nostrils,
fresh air tiptoes your tongue.
The core of the garden
a tall evergreen pine
is surrounded by tulips
reminds weareone.

BENJAMIN RU



Body of Water

The water of my body
has been prehistoric oceans,
has kissed mountaintops
and caressed lush valleys.
It has been lavender, lily, and hyacinth,
has doused fire and housed babies.

Is it any wonder why
I rush to the garden after it rains
like a lover enchanted.

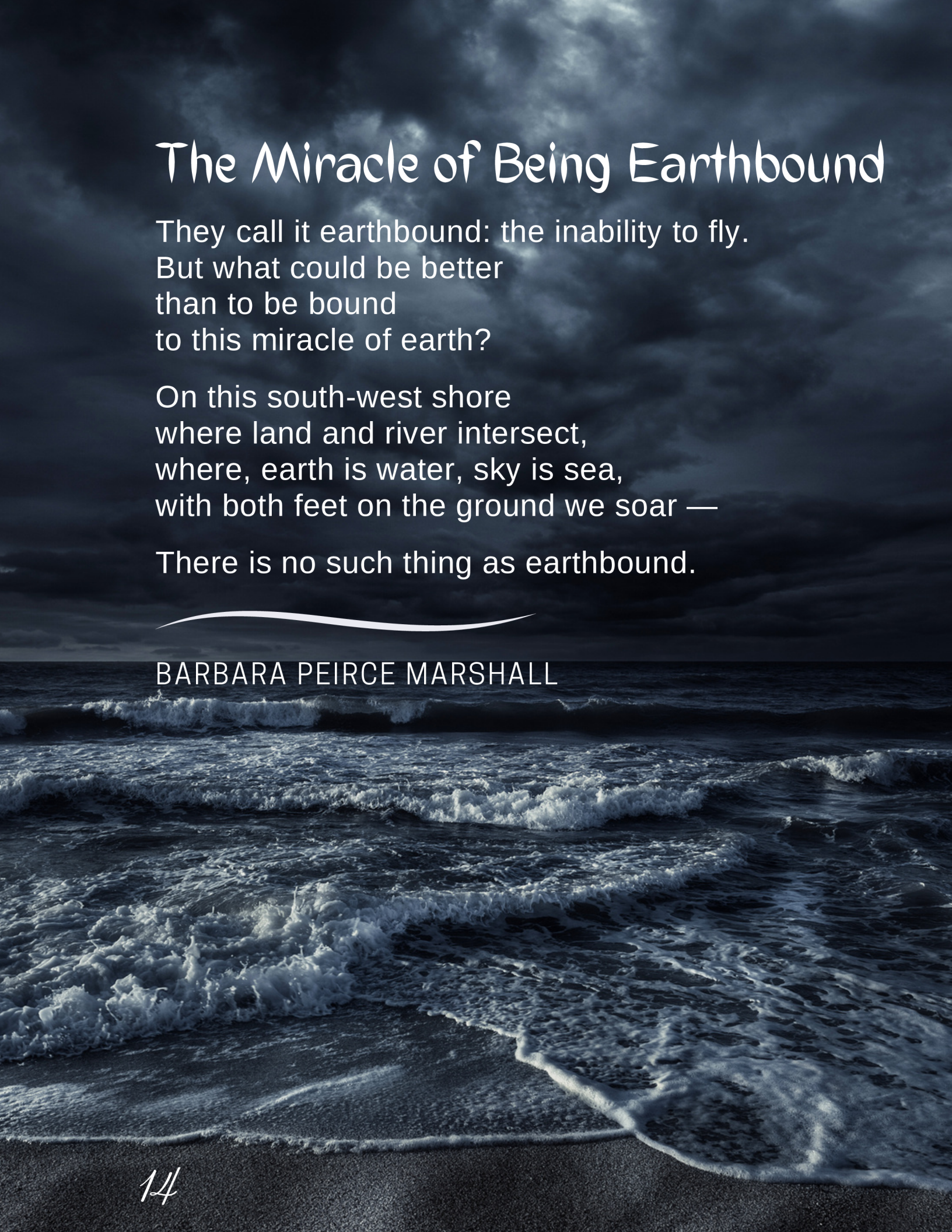
CRISSI COCHRANE





GORDIE HOWE
INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

Marty Gervais



The Miracle of Being Earthbound

They call it earthbound: the inability to fly.
But what could be better
than to be bound
to this miracle of earth?

On this south-west shore
where land and river intersect,
where, earth is water, sky is sea,
with both feet on the ground we soar —

There is no such thing as earthbound.

BARBARA PEIRCE MARSHALL

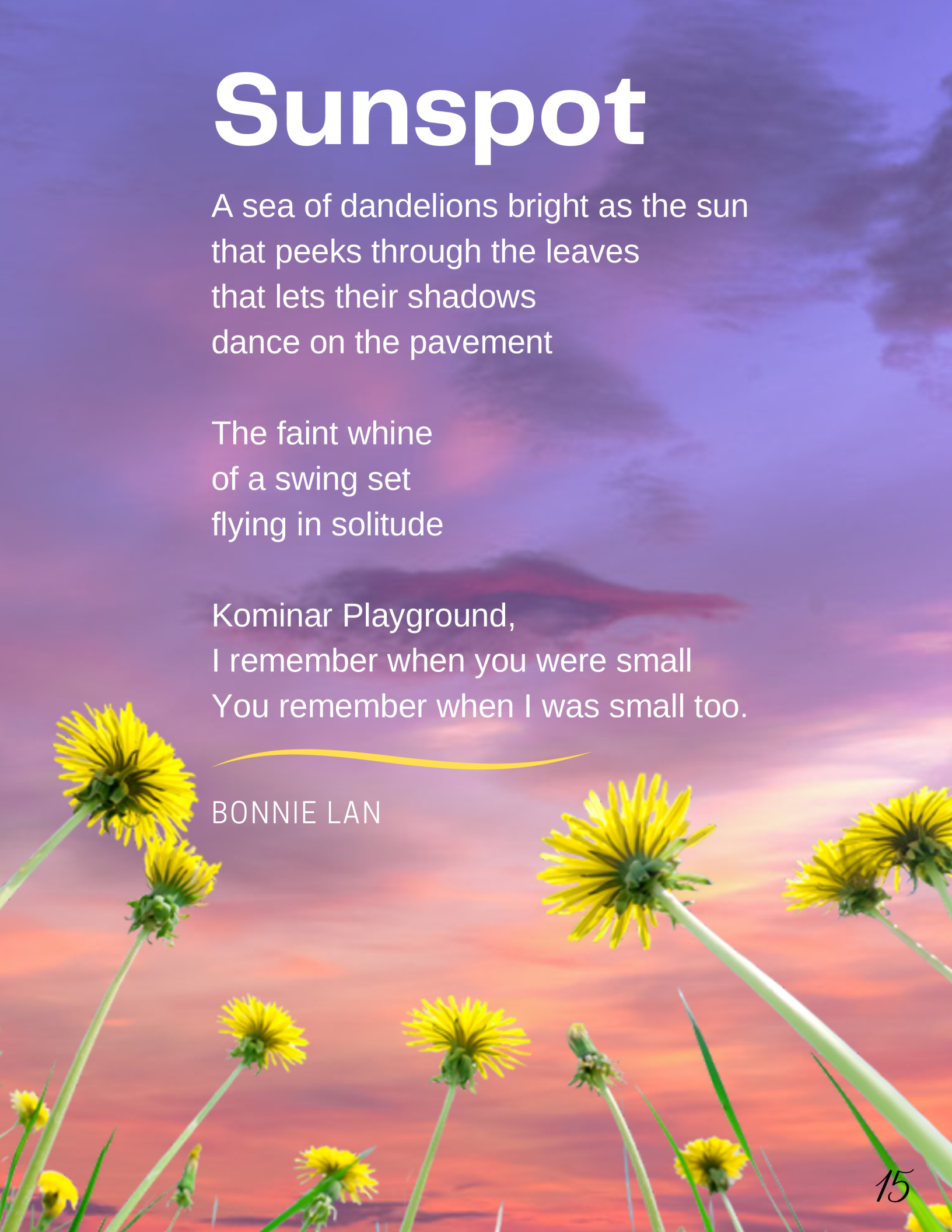
Sunspot

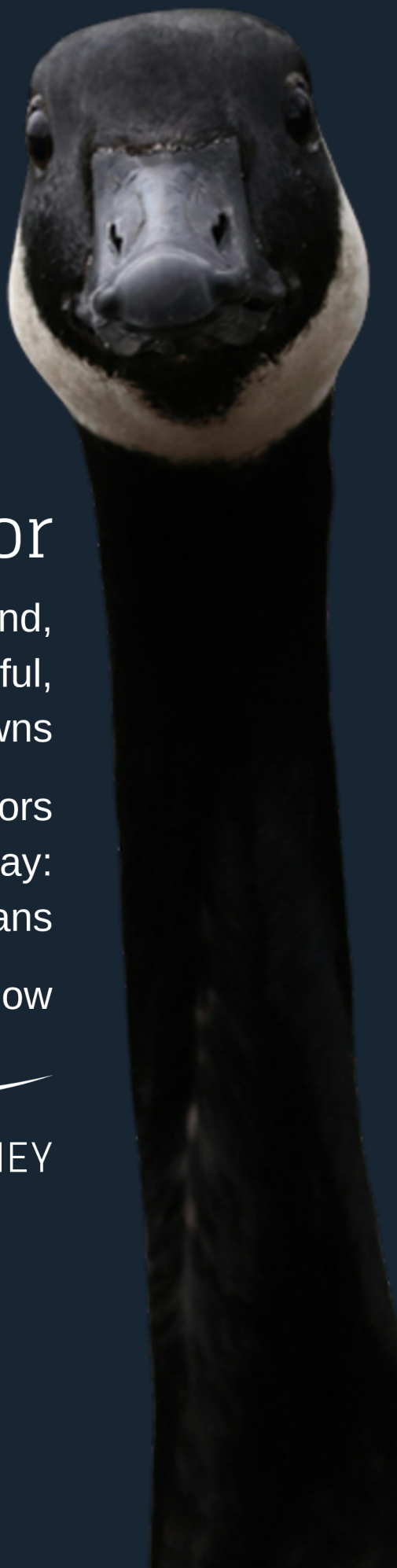
A sea of dandelions bright as the sun
that peeks through the leaves
that lets their shadows
dance on the pavement

The faint whine
of a swing set
flying in solitude

Kominar Playground,
I remember when you were small
You remember when I was small too.

BONNIE LAN





Returning to Windsor

again, eagles nest on Peche Island,
Jack Miner's geese are plentiful,
and wild turkeys roam our front lawns

then seasonal visitors
choose to stay:
robins, red-winged blackbirds, swans

what is it that birds know

DOROTHY MAHONEY

This Land

In honour of the Grand Opening of the New City Hall Square
Peter Hrastovec | Poet Laureate | 2025-07-13

Cities have the capability of providing
something for everybody,
only because, and only when,
they are created by everybody.
-Jane Jacobs

Breaking bark, bramble and bush,
tearing past trees that climb so high
they tickle the underbelly of clouds,
the first keepers of this earth emerged
to smell the river, to hear its roar.
They stopped to breathe,
take in with eyes astonished,
this space and acknowledged that
this land was good.

They were followed by the fitful
pioneers seeking prosperity, peace,
driving their horse-drawn ambition,
the burdens of history shouldered like
hard oak barrels laden with promise, grief.
They persisted, determined and resolute,
to build their own community, a town,
and here, a school, in this space since
this land was good.

And the unshackled freedom seekers,
scarred, brutalized, bearing the
remains of their flagging spirit,
trekked onward, starward,
rising above ground to this place,
mingling and mixing with refugees,
visionaries, idealists—all discarding
the remnants of bitterness, darkness,
built footings, foundations, recognizing
this land was good.

In time, architects, planners, labourers,
measured the distance between two places,
and envisioned developing this same space,
to give rise to a new purpose,
raise expectations,
engineer optimism, create memories,
lure the curious, beckon innovation,
foster friendships, heal sorrow, and
generate joy in this place where
this land was good.

This foresight—this prudent thinking
about neighborhood, community—
is rooted in generations,
wending its way here
over mountains, oceans,
and many miles, to find a home,
here where we are now,
here where we were then
and here forever,

because this land is good.



My Border City

The border city where I was born and raised,
Using Celsius on cold winter days,
Switching to Fahrenheit when summer rays blaze.
Two bridges and a tunnel connect our waterways.
Auto industry–known,
It's my home.
Our beloved Rose City.

CELESTE KURCZ

Inbox(2)

admissions | University of Windsor Application Decision -
Dear Mia, We are happy to…

University of Waterloo | Update to your application -
Hello Mia, There is a new decision…

“What are you waiting for? Accept your offer already.”
“Which one?”
“What do you mean which one.” “...”
“All these years… You have some audacity to be ungrateful for all the tutoring and even your own hard work. Your past self broke her back for this.”
“Okay.” “Anyone would kill to be in your position. What possible reason do you have that you’re even considering Windsor?
Nice weather. Pizza. The people. My friends.
“Windsor was just the safety net option.” “Okay, I accepted the offer.”
“Which one?”

MIA ISIDORE





Sweetness & Laughter

Bubbles & Cream
A boba shop at the York Plaza.
Rain, shine, sadness, laughter,
and life.
It’s seen it all.
The endless stream of boba cups.
The bitter-sweet after taste
of too-sweet tapioca pearls.
Too familiar to let go.
Just enough to call,
Home.

ZAYNAB ADLAN



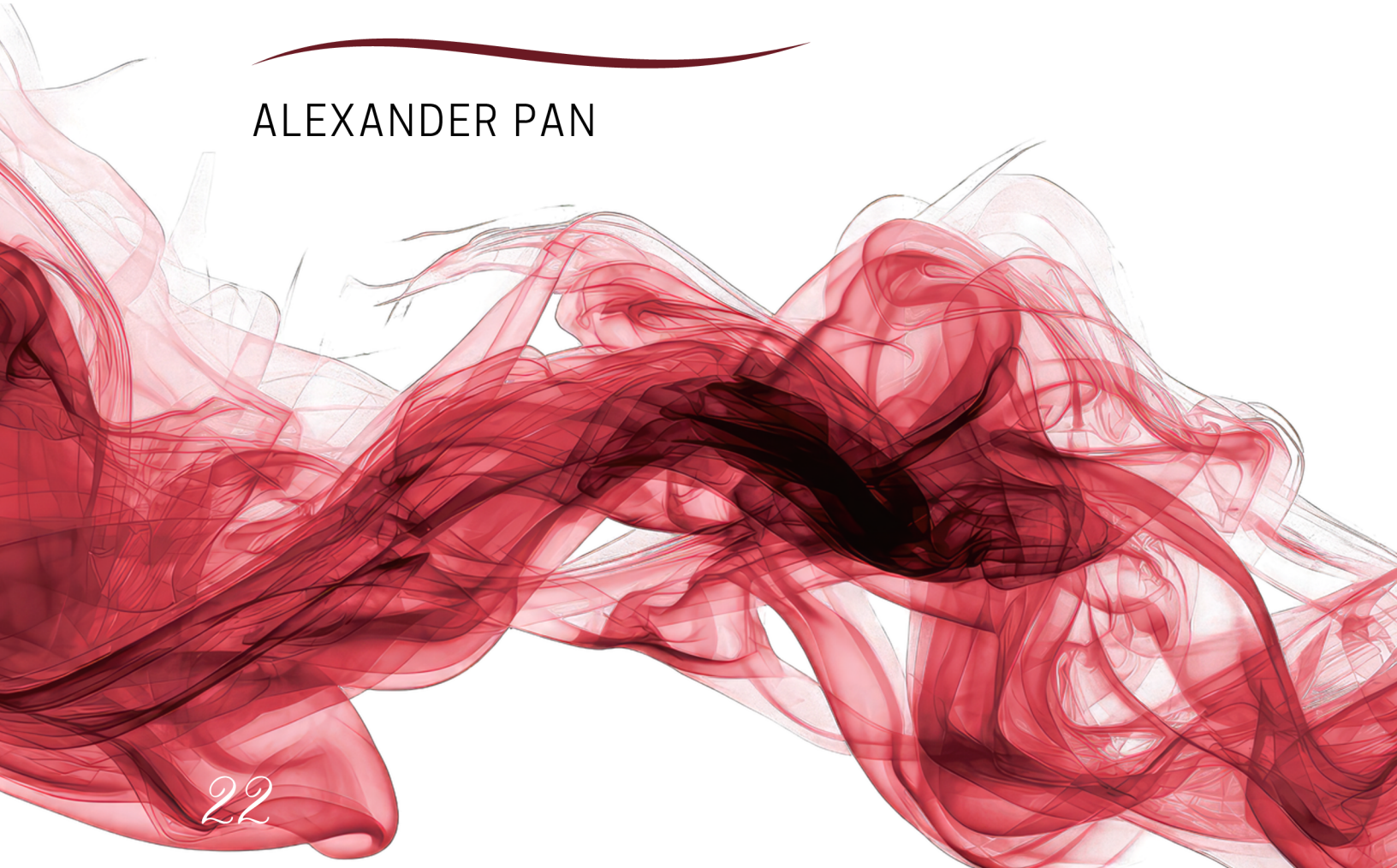
WHERE EARTH IS SKY AND SKY IS SEA

Barbara Peirce Marshall

Nosebleed

a warm, copper taste in the depths of your throat
a tissue blooms
red like a poppy with delicate roots
caressing the rich, moist earth.
drip, drip, drip, down the drain
you watch the frothing river of crimson swirl
it stops.
it was never going to go on forever
though, for a moment,
you wondered.

ALEXANDER PAN



In this city...

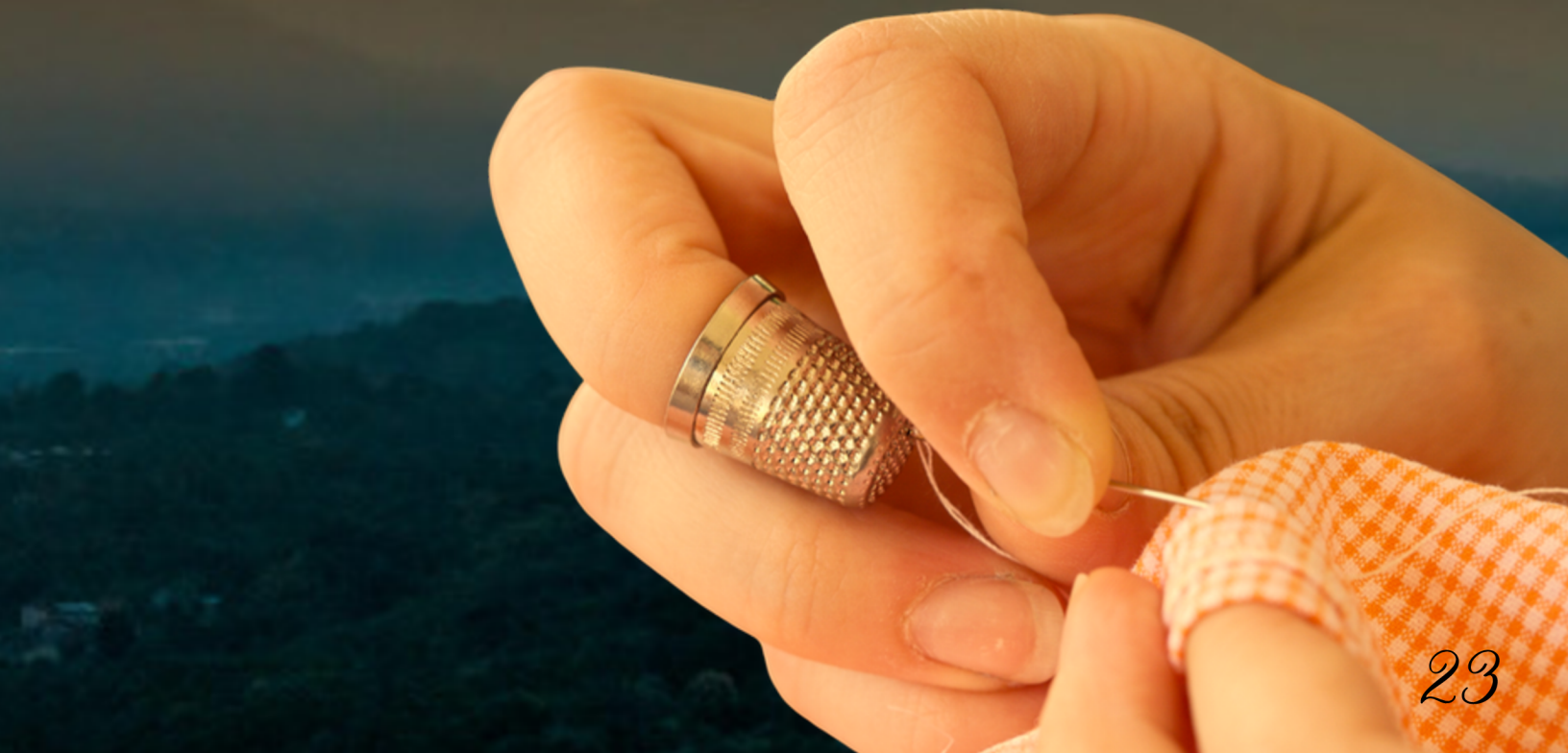
the old country hangs on gold chains, sainted: anthony for lost language
francis for poverty humbled, mary for mothers weeping in pews

grandfather's collar is green, grandmother's is white
a janitor and a seamstress: united and uniformed, unioned

they hold hands in Jackson Park as rose bushes blush redder
than cheeks flushed in young love – this city an immigrant canvas

her needle, his broom build a family – Sunday meals, CBC on the radio
in this city, this landing place, the flowing river proves permanence profound

VANESSA SHIELDS





OJIBWAY

Marty Gervais

24



Windsor

Windsor is my home,
of United Nations.
It's a hockey town plus
Carrousel of the Nations.
Windsor is a border town
with Detroit, where a river
runs between.

KATHI TRUSCOTT-COUSINEAU



UNTITLED

Stacy Somerville

DRIVING TO CALDWELL

I
Driving through the night, we pass Amherstburg.
Our destination: the indigenous settlement.
A remnant of the moon blurs against the snow,
Fringing thin fields of yellow grass.
I watch in solitude,
Yet feeling a surge of joy—
Like a squirrel sensing for the first time
The intricate bird-homes tucked in the soft grass.

II
The car hurtles down the highway.
Along the way, glowing billboards flash the word "ONTARIO."
Deep in the secret reaches of the fields,
Creatures unknown to us are on the move.
Their stillness feels like a prelude
To a sudden ambush... while we are utterly naked.
No weapons in hand, we have nothing to offer
But a few stray bones and two beating hearts.

III
Nearing Caldwell,
Moonlight congeals in the mist
Upon the windowpane. No one notices
The damp message of stones
On the roadside branches.
The gas station—where tobacco is traded—glows a vivid red;
The rain-slicked streets are deserted.
As we arrive, the moon peers through the clouds.
The rain stops. Stepping out with the tobacco, I open the car door,
And a few gathered droplets scatter from the crown of a shimmering aspen —
A tremor so real, so sudden,
Like a soul startled by a vast, overwhelming grief.

YONGPING YUAN

Land & Sea

Luminous Windsor nights with the river shimmering,
breathing, reflecting & sharing like an open mic on the shores.

Ambassador waves hello in my peripheral,
an iron prayer lifting footsteps from one homeland to another once more.

Nibi* flowing, patient and powerful, carving, cleansing,
carrying memory older than industry, older than border, older than war.

Down where the river bends, grasses bowing, whispering,
remembering the earth steady beneath us, generous and sacred at its core.

& a bridge of breath between both worlds of liquid and solid.

Strait talk, Windsor-Detroit scripture, freighters dragging constellations
heavy and solemn, ancient and acknowledged through lodges.

East side heart beats where Caesars' lights blink code to Motown
and the tunnel hums bass as my steps hand out hugs to the land gladly.

Anishinaabe Aki* enduring, guiding, breathing,
people protecting, honoring, rising, still here, still kin, still family.

ishKode



FARM WAGONS
AFTER SOYBEAN HARVEST

Marty Gervais



LAKE ERIE

Christopher L.M.

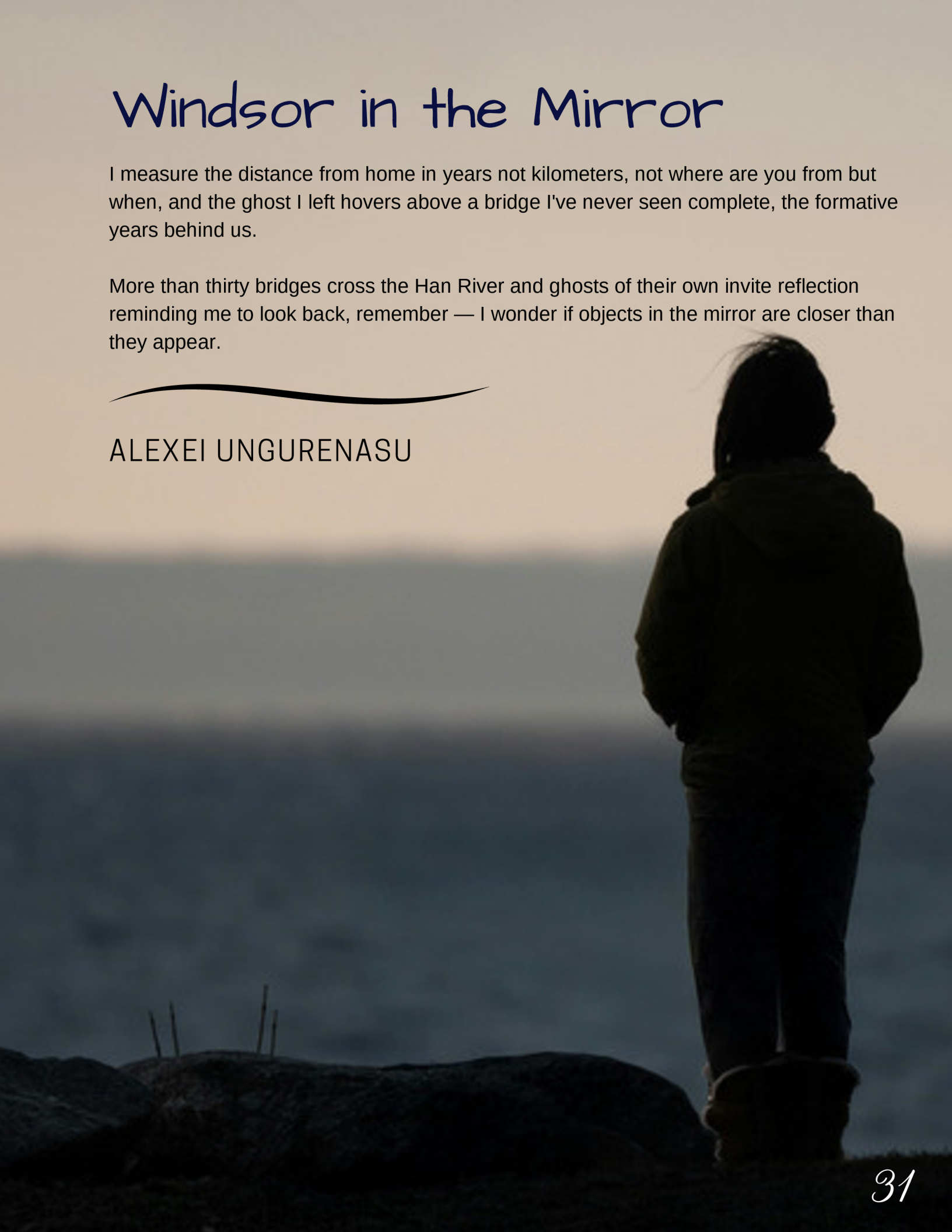
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Windsor in the Mirror

I measure the distance from home in years not kilometers, not where are you from but when, and the ghost I left hovers above a bridge I've never seen complete, the formative years behind us.

More than thirty bridges cross the Han River and ghosts of their own invite reflection reminding me to look back, remember — I wonder if objects in the mirror are closer than they appear.

ALEXEI UNGURENASU



Land & Sea,
A Life For Me

Never hath the river waned,
Nor hath my blood been stained.
Only now I see the day,
To which my dreams have come to pray.
Sun and stream have yet to beam,
Subtle lines coloured in between.
The new, the old, the warm, the cold,
All in file, ne’er to be sold.

CHRISTOPHER DUROCHER



Merging

In sweet blue I seek

Tidal waves and ocean roars unite
Through night and shine as one
Shallow and profound
You are all to be found

Sweet blue Lord,
Sweet blue sea
Sweet blue - carry me

PEDRO D'AVILA

WILLISTEAD MANOR IN WINTER

Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island Collection



with a hollow rumble of wings

Last spring I buried a blue jay,
nestled deep between the fig tree's roots.

All summer we watched the fruitlets grow,
waiting for September's ripening swell.

A bumper crop. Each fig was sweet and tender
as a bruise, with a wild aftertaste of sky.

CHRISTINE PENNYLEGION





MORNING TIM HORTONS

Marty Gervais



NO WORDS

words can't describe her my friends
couldn't do her justice,
no matter how hard I might try
words are futile,
it's a feeling..... an emotion
an endless love,
my city and home
my life

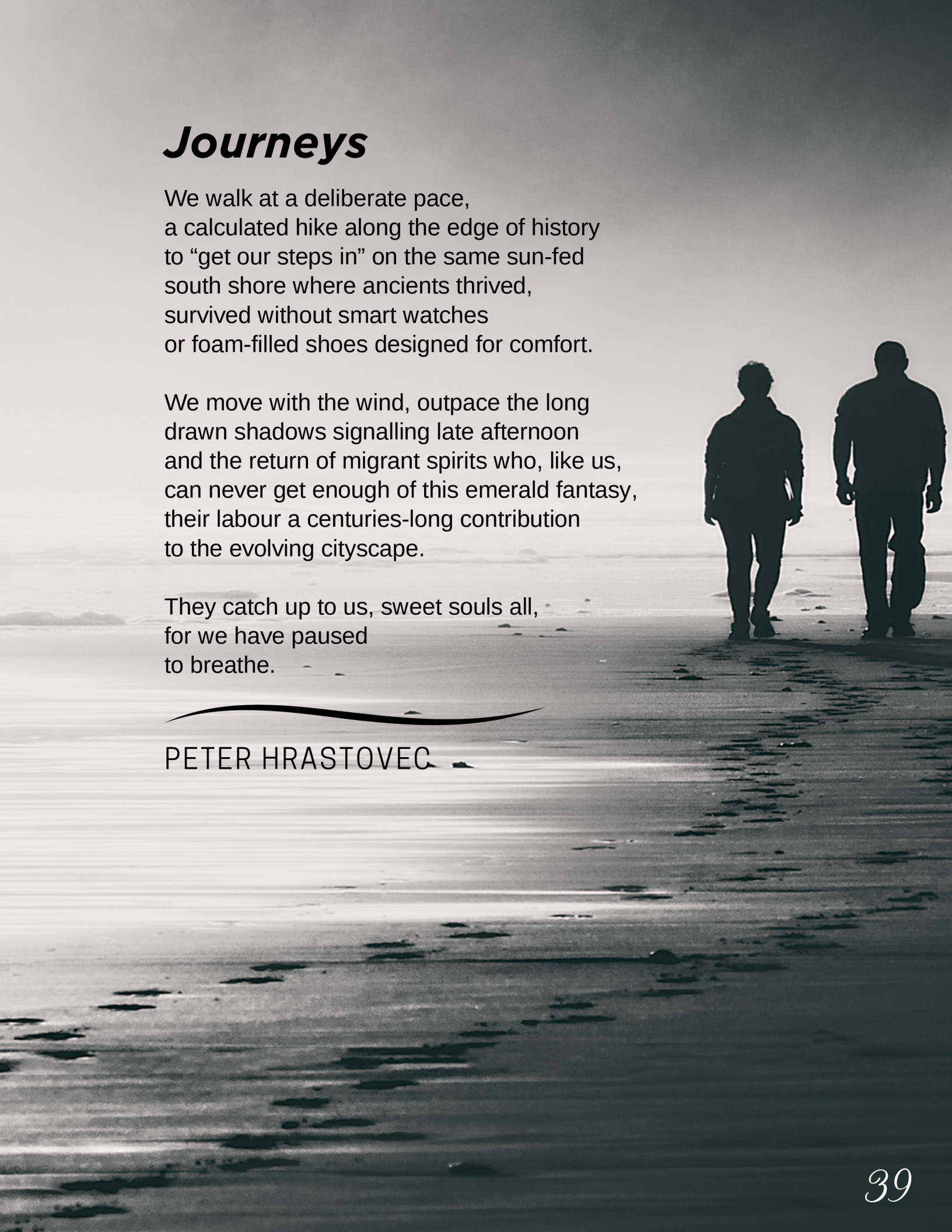
LARRY HOBSON



A Special Place I Call Home

April 1970
Called Windsor our home
Small city, beautiful scenery,
All around.
I especially thought the riverfront was totally amazing
And so many boats!
The Peace Fountain,
Walks along the riverfront,
So much to see
So very enjoyable.
Lots of special memories
To cherish.
A creative community
Meet new people and share
Similar interests
Cooking, arts, the beach.
Have a meal with family,
Watch a movie with friends and have a good laugh!
Weddings in a waterfront park,
Couples in love
Exchange vows and begin
Life together.
The young bring happiness,
Share with generations.
Windsor will surprise us all!
Smile on your face,
Look up,
Parades
The music is playing in your heart.
Windsor, you got it!

MARIANNA DASACCO



Journeys

We walk at a deliberate pace,
a calculated hike along the edge of history
to “get our steps in” on the same sun-fed
south shore where ancients thrived,
survived without smart watches
or foam-filled shoes designed for comfort.

We move with the wind, outpace the long
drawn shadows signalling late afternoon
and the return of migrant spirits who, like us,
can never get enough of this emerald fantasy,
their labour a centuries-long contribution
to the evolving cityscape.

They catch up to us, sweet souls all,
for we have paused
to breathe.

PETER HRASTOVEC



Dancing Trees in Ojibway

for my grandchildren

It is not quite summer but the trees
are already dancing under a stormy sky
and this is good I would tell my grandchildren
if they were nearby but I walk alone

it would sound wise probably
or if they start reading Hemingway
they would see the influence
or see that it's true, the trees are dancing

and that is good, and they stretch and move
with poise and grace in a time that calls
for this little bit of joy in a time that tells me
there is something better, in a time

when being alone really means this is good
this is a time to pause, to stop me in my tracks
and let me see their young limbs dancing
beneath all that is stormy, all that is alone

MARTY GERVAIS

From "Walk in the Woods"



A Deer in the Woods

In the hunger of winter
a deer stands alone

as if she welcomes me
pleads for food

I offer food from my hand
her mouth moves
across my palm
gentle and soft

so many blessings
shining in her eyes

all for an apple
cut in half

MARY ANN MULHERN

From “Walk in the Woods”

Thank You...

To all those who submitted poems and photos, and to...

OUR SUBMISSION REVIEWERS

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Peter Hrastovec, Poet Laureate

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COLLECTION DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Christopher Lawrence Menard, Supervisor, Cultural Affairs



TUFTED TITMOUSE, OJIBWAY

Sarah Johnson