

you wrote the next.

Francesca Leader

I wrote one line,

I dreamed we wrote a poem together—

How I Knew I Loved You

Why I Shave

Because some evenings
her head nods over work

it's most important
that no rough chin scratch

her tender neck or distract
her from my small kisses.

Mark J. Mitchell

Hunger

Like squirrels
who knot our yard
in silver threads, I ache
to crimson my lips
with berries –
although they're toxic,
might alter my heart
rhythms.
Slow down!
warn my ghosts.

Be thankful for desire,
for the search.

Cathleen Cohen

Ways to Worship

My mother hung clothes
on the line. In the sun
and wind she pinned them
to sway and flutter like prayer
Flags she had never seen.

Marthew Murrey

The day will break
us from each other;
for now, my hair
fills your open hands.

Jennifer Browne

[Sunday]

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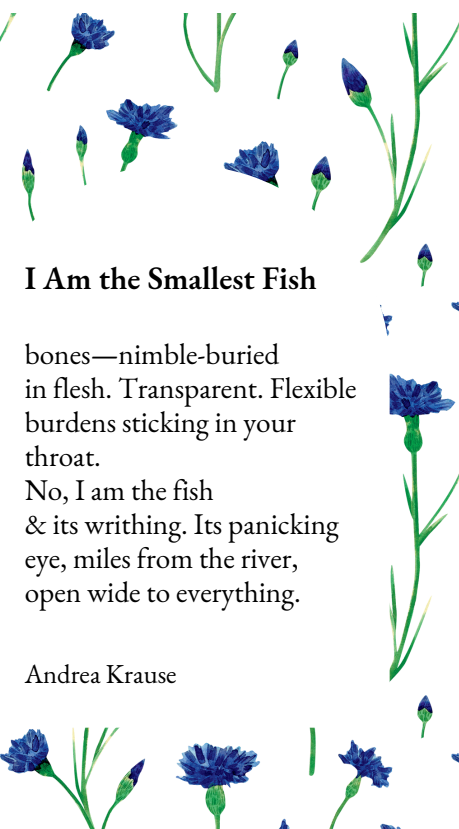
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Translated From Grief
Now that I'm drowning,
you've thrown me a loop
of lilies
I once grew for you.

Cheryl Rebello



I Am the Smallest Fish

bones—nimble-buried
in flesh. Transparent. Flexible
burdens sticking in your
throat.
No, I am the fish
& its writhing. Its panicking
eye, miles from the river,
open wide to everything.

Andrea Krause

Join Me in the Sargasso Sea (*Anguilla anguilla*)

Aristotle mused that
mud birthed our kind,
as if earth's hands
sculpted our bodies
on the pottery wheel.

Baby, let's slip under
the radar undetected,
back through currents
and into the salty abyss,

vanishing as mysteriously
as we once appeared.

Bethany Cutkomp

At 3 a.m., I Begin to Doubt

I was thinking
of your fishnet
shawl, how fortunate
are Salmon, their
certainty of return.

Tom Dvorske



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Look up

See? Between

clouds
it's blue
like a lake
flowing into a river
and opening
again a lake

Margaret Rozga



All There Is

Sunlight and river,
y/ours the only mouth.

Jennifer Browne

Proof

Outside, first glance
branch tips glowing
conch-gold, pink-gold.
The ground just starting
to smell of earthworms.

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KateLynn Hibbard

Last night
as the sky grew dark,
It looked like a river
flowing east
between the trees.
Nothing
is as real
as the body,
and nothing as unreal
as the things
we tell ourselves
about death.

Sunset



John Grey

'Twillight sanctuary,
a tired, ancient sun,
yachts suspended.
sails like golden parchment,
shoreline inhaling
the slow salty breath of the sea,
a few more moments
of natural light,
until the dark of penance begins.

Last Observation of the Bay Before Nightfall



February Dark

After John Irving

Such an informal winter—
no cold to speak of,
the days short and dark,
the nights as broad
as a stocking stretched
on the dry rack—my mood blue-gray
like a revolver.

When I wake the bed is empty,
but I can't remember if it should be.

Frances Klein



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Meg Yardley

She seasons me
parting salt in between
It would hurt if I weren't
already dried stretched wide
Off the frame I'll taste tough
I'll travel well I won't talk

She Seasons

Sara Lynne Puotinen

'Too big for this small lake,
six giant swans glide
beside the far shore
in a slow march of magic
& menace. Each time I breathe
to my left they appear.
Sometimes I ignore them, and
sometimes I believe
they're not boats.

The Swans

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Unthemed



Jayant Kashyap

The year wouldn't stop, wait
for us to come along –
everyone has their own pace, it'd say
which is okay, it'd say again –
so we gave it a veil –
go unwatched, we said
are well-rested, the ones that need
water can have all of it as they desire,
the ones that need more time
can have all the time in the world.

Kindness



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Off Season
After Sappho
First, daffodils rose in the field.
nodding, nodding—off season.
Then, the hyacinths,
sickly scent and armored petals.
Was I afraid I would be trampled?
The sorrow bloom, ballooned
became the bubble we lived in.
Through it, everything blurred—

Iris Jamahl Dunkle



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If time
let birds
roost in her tree
they would
share the fruit
some greedy
for flesh
some greedy
for seeds
Carol Dorf



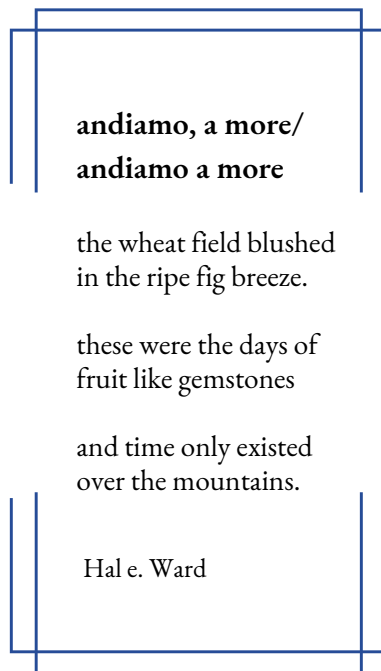
andiamo, a more/
andiamo a more

the wheat field blushed
in the ripe fig breeze.

these were the days of
fruit like gemstones

and time only existed
over the mountains.

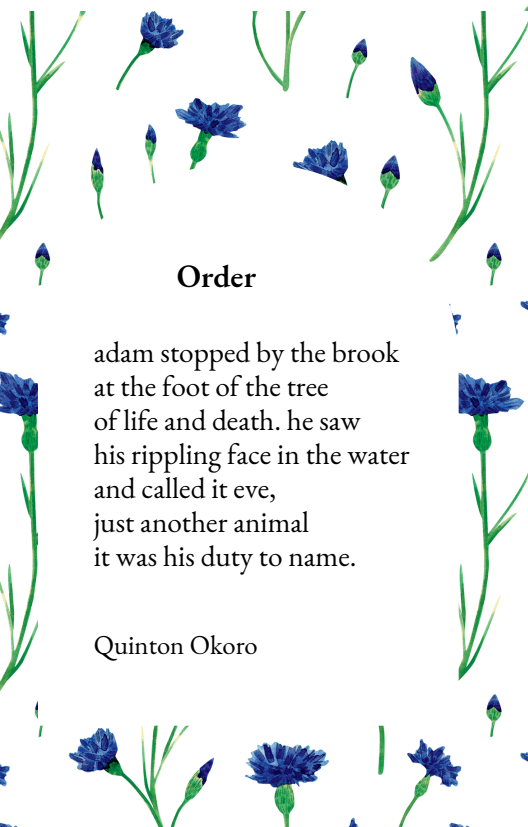
Hal e. Ward



Birdwatching During
the Pandemic

A brief glimpse of motion,
then pain.
The hummingbirds
have acquired
a taste for blood.

RK Rugg



Order

adam stopped by the brook
at the foot of the tree
of life and death. he saw
his rippling face in the water
and called it eve,
just another animal
it was his duty to name.

Quinton Okoro

Doppelgänger

Find me,
and end this –
all of this.
I do not wear this face
or this life
gracefully
anyway.
You can have them both –
I'm not here to stay.

Amrita V. Nair

sweet nothing

Have you noticed
the moths
who flit around us
wear our sweaters better
than we do
in their little
moth stomachs?

Reece Critzmacher

Sideshow

I learned to eat fire when
I was nine. Crowds burned
to see a kid eat death.

Folks are easy to fool—
shave a dead monkey, get
a baby with a tail.

I learned to eat fire.
There's trick to it. Always.
And life's just

another travelling show—
you want to believe
any fool thing offered.

Linda Mills Woolsey

echo

always, i grow in
circles. the light in
my hands offering

memory, the drizzle
& downpour bringing
the flood.

Ivi Hua

Hive Mind (ketek)

Serving glorious royalty
we contentedly join
the hive,
the joint contentedness
we royally, gloriously serve

TS S. Fulk

Usefulness

I want to, one day,
discover that I,
like the tiny gray spider
gliding with purpose
across my kitchen floor,
have important work
to do.

Christina Linsin

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Cocoon

Wombed in its silken tomb,
does the chrysalis feel

its old body die as a new one
curdles out of silence?

Dying and becoming.
Lost and latent.

Blind to here.
Dissolving in now.

Present. Present. Present.

B. Fulton Jennes



Dead Air

They say the static
of a dead channel
is the cold rattling
of a dead star,
spending its last moments
begging
to be heard one last time.

Ly Faulk

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Angry Verse Poem

I'm not going to waste fourteen lines
on the fact that now,
we're stranger than strangers.
But honestly speaking,
a haiku wouldn't have done either.



Amrita V. Nair

I Don't Want To Be A Person Anymore

I'm a little hedgehog,
writing my little
hedgehog poems.
I'm binding them into a book,
written on onion skin
with ground-up indigo
as ink.

Ly Faulk

Folded

she folded herself—
elbows against kneecaps,
head tucked into her belly;
she tried very hard to be small
and so she was

Lisa Rabey

Slam Dancing in Austin While Pregnant

They tried to ignite an American flag
with several flicks of a lighter, but
the damned thing wouldn't burn.

When the punk band started its set,
the crowd writhed like maggots

and shoved—one against other,
barely missing my swollen belly.

You dodged their blows without effort.

I know you aimed for a different womb.
Thirty-three years later, you're still dodging.

Leah Mueller