

V. Poetry of the Reviewers of Ladders Made of Water

James Clarke, J.S. Porter, Susan McCaslin, Anna Verprinska and Elana Wolff

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V. Poetry of the Reviewers of *Ladders Made of Water*

This section features the poetry of the reviewers of *Ladders*, who B. W. Powe invited to contribute to this celebration of *Ladders Made of Water*.

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1. **James Clarke**
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A CRY OF THE HEART
(inspired by B. W. Powe.)

Our ailing world is breathing the last syllables
of the old order, changing at warp speed.
The tools we shaped are now shaping us.
We have bowed to the golden calf of
digital world where our
horizons have been reduced to the size of
cell phones and pixels leaving a gaping
hole in our hearts.

technology, a

Virtual reality has become the new norm.
Algorithms hunt and feed our weaknesses and
Dazed by a whorl of ills--
decline of faith, loss of human intimacy and
a deluge of data, slogans and disinformation--
we’re trembling in the vibrations of our own
invention; we don’t know how to
stop or slow down our hyper speed lives.
Mother Earth’s on the cusp of imploding.
Lead us, Lord, to that still pool of silence, where we
can see reflected the cosmic dance
of Your heavenly lights. rest on the lap of nature
and breathe deeply again. Only the indwelling
Your Spirit, a greening transformation of

bundles of desires.

of Your of
the innermost recesses

of our hearts and
minds, can give us hope, assure us we
are not powerless and alone.

THE VISONARY'S WAY

(inspired by B. W. Powe)

Why, we ask, does a shadow keep falling on
our journey? The structures that govern
our lives are oppressive and soul-crushing.
In this monstrous era of satellites tyrants have
the power to look down on us. tap into our
inner lives. Self-help books that attempt to
cure our angst slip into banality, logic doesn't
virtue, and the neural pathway
between heart and mind grows longer. We've
lost the breath that tells us who we are, stand
on the brink of a tsunami of the soul.

convert to

Yet, despite the darkness, at times when we
least expect it, the beauty and joy of creation
still shine through . Hope comes in flashes and
moments of stillness, to jump-start our vision.
Windows open and we see shimmers of light
rippling across the sky, signals of the sacred
echo in our souls We hear again the carefree
laughter of children on the streets, encounter
strangers who add acts of kindness to our lives,
find ourselves praying to whoever may be there.

As our world loses its fears and narrow
antipathies we want to believe that this dark
too will pass and a new world beyond our vision,
transfigured by love, will be born and our lives
fill with gratitude. We have no certainties, but know
is expanding in our heart
the Morse code of love.

something awesome

2. Susan McCaslin
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Dear William,

So if your Dad beat you for seeing your treeful of angels
what of us who got TV instead of Vision and no beatings?
What happens to the reconstructive Imagination
after a hundred replays of "I Love Lucy"
or driving down the Information Highway
or thousands of hours in front of Nintendo?
Not part of your cosmology?
You wouldn't rant?
Go ahead and blast the stations of the nerves alive
with jumping words.

Look, I just require an hour
away from the mechanical ratio
of laundry and driving my child to lessons,
a tall decaf latte at Starbucks.

But then I'm back in it
and it's all monotony again.

Please pass me down a sunflower
rooted in its orbit round the sun.

Ah, Sunflower!
I cling to your roots
while dangling over the abyss.

The next three poems of Susan McCaslin are from her book *Heart Work* (Ekstasis Editions, 2020):

Bee & Peony

Un-panicking
with Pan

Bee-atific
beings

become
one pink flush

one opens
one sips & sups

so they
ecstatic

co-inhabit
paradise

and we
though purblind

may quaff
those perfumed depths

through one sweet intake
of breath

Logos / logos

In the beginning Logos/ Sophia
wisdom dance danced us in ripples and riffs of language

male & female neither male nor female
words and interspace cadenzas inter-meshed

Then came the logos ads slogans headlines trademarks
titillation twitters and tweets late capitalism's whipped up emojis

anger-entangled slick un-justiced end cons which we devour
panicked in our pandemic of too much indigestible information

“Logos /logos”: Aspects of this poem were inspired by B.W. Powe's *the charge in the global membrane* (NeoPoiesis Press, 2019).

Spiral Dynamics

Some pause from twittering
tweeting on machines

succumb to song
 of the hermit thrush

matchless virtuoso
spinning silken bridges

in octaves
that spiral beyond

our auditory range
 notes so fleet and strange

hearts bow

in matter's

mysterium

Bee & Peony

Un-panicking
with Pan

Bee-atific
beings

become
one pink flush

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3. J.S. Porter
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B.W. POWE's VOICE

Once, in my company, B.W. Powe described a great writer's voice as

thin reedy frail vulnerable

Powe's voice isn't thin, reedy or frail but it is vulnerable.

When he speaks through the many masks at play in his work

poet, essayist, storyteller, teacher, explorer

you fear for him, you wonder about his self-protection, how much he's willing to risk

how close to the bone he's going to go – like any other acrobat on the high wire

will he fall? will he hurt himself?

It's the danger, the vulnerability, that make you read and reread him.

He does what former American poet laureate Billy Collins says not to do.

He gets personal, he names the ones he loves—

his mother, his father, his wife, his children, his uncles, friends,

all the shields and armour that for a time shelter the isolated self.

His work a strange combination of prayer and probe,

Song like a shadow in a ruin.

4. Anna Veprinska - Speaking Speaking

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Speaking, speaking

Everything speaks, he offers, his face
a prayer. *Stones, birds, wires, trees.*
If everything speaks, then
what is it saying? The tongue
is a muscle that lifts
out of silence, strokes teeth
like a mother urging children
in the dark wet archive
of the mouth, eyeing the world
for an instant before drawing
back. A river's mouth
is a meeting place, a point where gushing
slows, where one liquid god
pours into another. Sometimes
I open my mouth just
to hear how sound
greet sound. Oh, Philomela,
you taught me the tongue
is not the only tapestry
with which to speak. At the cemetery,
hush is swapped for weeping,
for the coat cradle of arms.
The stones turn their faces away in respect.

5. Elana Wolff

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Luna

You are full of glitches and I write my little songs.

You grin like a backhand slap, I sit and scribble.
One in stone and one / aloneness; bed or breakfast,

which came first ... arm or harm or charm ...

The secrecies of outer / inner. Flips and language bits—
seeing these as p/art of poetry's

work. And choosing from among the waiting words

to have them fit—in lines that might be said
to write themselves. I cast a piece with you herein,

your takes and your mistakes. You gave your face

for free, like Carrie Fisher signed her girlhood likeness—
Princess Leia—to Lucas. I claim your beauty too:

radiant in phases, grand and warm; at other times, ethereal,
oblique. I'll see you at the waterfall tonight.

The song of falling water blankets the sadness. Yes,
I'll be alone. You will be alone as well.