

# cloud birds

Sheila Packa

Wildwood River Press

Copyright ©2011 Sheila Packa  
All Rights Reserved

ISBN: 978-0-9843777-2-5  
Library of Congress Control Number: 2010935471

Wildwood River Press  
200 Mount Royal Shopping Circle  
P.O. Box 3280  
Duluth, MN 55803-2633  
[www.wildwoodriver.com](http://www.wildwoodriver.com)

Visual art ©Cecilia Ramon, "Refuge, I (homage to Ana Mendieta)"  
Book design by Kathy McTavish ([www.mctavish.io](http://www.mctavish.io))  
The text of *Surface Displacements* is set in Crimson Pro

Other books by Sheila Packa: *Mother Tongue*, *Echo & Lightning*,  
*Migrations*, *Night Train Red Dust: Poems of the Iron Range*, and *Surface Displacements*

“Dozen” was published in *Shared Visions*, Calyx Press, 2004. “Between Two Shores” and “Wave” (as “Shadow in the Twilight,” a slightly different version) were published in *Trail Guide: Northland Experience in Poetry and Prints*, Calyx Press, 2005. “My Father” and “Across the Border” were published in *Kippis!* Winter 2010. “Not Forgotten” received a poetry award at the Bob Dylan Festival in Hibbing, Minnesota. “I Said I” and “In Translation” appeared in the online poetry journal, *qarrtsiluni*, 2011. “Broken Line” was published in the chapbook, *Love’s Cloth*, for the exhibit at the North End Gallery in Superior, Wisconsin, *Venus: Poets & Fiber Artists Reflect*, 2008.

Thank you to the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council and the Loft McKnight Fellowships for past financial support.

*there are still other songs  
magic words learned of,  
plucked from the wayside,  
broken off from the heather,  
torn from thickets,  
dragged from saplings...*

*— The Kalevala*

# Table of Contents

## bear

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| the chosen . . . . .       | 2  |
| spilled . . . . .          | 3  |
| bear . . . . .             | 4  |
| primitive . . . . .        | 5  |
| cloud birds . . . . .      | 6  |
| wave . . . . .             | 7  |
| red . . . . .              | 8  |
| encounter . . . . .        | 9  |
| rough tongue . . . . .     | 10 |
| body of a bear . . . . .   | 11 |
| juneberries . . . . .      | 12 |
| body of a woman . . . . .  | 13 |
| spectrum . . . . .         | 14 |
| following . . . . .        | 15 |
| isn't enough . . . . .     | 17 |
| berries . . . . .          | 18 |
| without the body . . . . . | 19 |
| sub-boreal . . . . .       | 20 |
| voice . . . . .            | 21 |
| spine . . . . .            | 22 |
| wild . . . . .             | 23 |
| pine . . . . .             | 25 |
| season of sleep . . . . .  | 26 |
| absence . . . . .          | 27 |
| honey . . . . .            | 28 |
| opposites . . . . .        | 29 |

## wing

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| memory migration . . . . . | 31 |
| traveling light . . . . .  | 32 |
| fluency . . . . .          | 34 |
| rapture . . . . .          | 36 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| was it I . . . . .                         | 37 |
| velocity . . . . .                         | 41 |
| woman, river . . . . .                     | 43 |
| door . . . . .                             | 45 |
| dozen . . . . .                            | 46 |
| between two shores . . . . .               | 47 |
| grow free . . . . .                        | 48 |
| coffee . . . . .                           | 50 |
| pretend . . . . .                          | 51 |
| breathe . . . . .                          | 52 |
| grandmother rising . . . . .               | 54 |
| in translation . . . . .                   | 55 |
| isoaiti . . . . .                          | 56 |
| blizzard . . . . .                         | 58 |
| thread . . . . .                           | 60 |
| broken line . . . . .                      | 61 |
| bridge . . . . .                           | 62 |
| under wing . . . . .                       | 64 |
| peeling apples . . . . .                   | 65 |
| not forgotten . . . . .                    | 67 |
| magic . . . . .                            | 68 |
| my father . . . . .                        | 69 |
| in the factory canteen . . . . .           | 70 |
| casualty of the underground mine . . . . . | 71 |
| sheets . . . . .                           | 72 |
| banners . . . . .                          | 73 |
| sculpture . . . . .                        | 74 |
| unnamed . . . . .                          | 75 |

## migration

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| refraction . . . . .       | 77 |
| love . . . . .             | 79 |
| road . . . . .             | 80 |
| two worlds . . . . .       | 81 |
| departure's gift . . . . . | 83 |

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| across the border . . . . . | 84 |
| street musician . . . . .   | 85 |
| in green . . . . .          | 87 |
| migrations . . . . .        | 89 |
| waking . . . . .            | 91 |
| immigrant . . . . .         | 94 |
| I said I . . . . .          | 95 |
| landscape . . . . .         | 97 |

## Acknowledgments

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Afterword . . . . . | 99 |
|---------------------|----|



bear

## the chosen

I came home  
to hear the great grey owl  
call into  
the early dark of winter  
beyond the clearing  
over the growl and screech  
of an animal sheltered  
by a fallen tree  
burrowed out of reach  
of the talons and beak  
below the black tangle  
and pine spears  
above the crystalline snow  
between day turning into night  
and the moon's light  
emanating from cold drifts —  
a merciless hide and seek  
followed by inscrutable silence  
awoken by the voice of a dream  
I saw the dark angel lift  
its wings into the old ash  
near and far the gleam of star  
or flame with no in- or exhalation  
where wind hauls its ice  
and diamonds sift  
into the blue night

## spilled

for Ana Mendieta

so light  
the trembling of leaves  
in the water's mirror  
    shadow of your contour  
shoulder on shore  
    line of tree, your spine  
so dark  
    the stones depth, cold hip  
I trace the root  
    in the earth's script  
where you've cast runes  
    written yourself in blood  
or feathers spilled and mud  
    taken up with gunpowder  
returned what never returns  
    to the continent or your hands  
memory of fire  
    that cast its spark  
into the vast body giving birth  
    and reaching  
the branch that breaks  
    beneath the feet  
drew yourself upon a leaf  
    falling  
from a tree or upper story  
    lost with certainty  
the perfect execution  
    self was never the answer  
only earth

## **bear**

In the forest we cross paths.  
Trees shift like a curtain  
and the magician in black coat tails  
steps into the spotlight.

Fears loom like large boxes on wheels.  
I watch darkness in the darkness  
take in one breath at the edge  
while the other side rolls like a dark sea.

Is this the god that summoned me?

The bear has no sleight of hand  
it conceals, reveals  
silhouette, dark coat, red sequins, flashing swords.

I heard wings.  
We come together for this ceremony  
a dove flies up  
time stutters, runs both forward and back.

A blade plunges in dark silk  
in the hush, an electric solitude  
I begin another journey.

## primitive

in the green  
under shadows with wide wing spans  
  
on the roots of the oldest melancholy tree  
  
deep in bright ferns  
with darkness on our skin  
etched like lace  
  
in our own strange garden  
of music and reverie  
  
memory found by going off course  
  
in the sunlight of this cathedral space  
in the thicket near the river's source  
  
weeping at the beauty  
join our bodies irrevocably

## cloud birds

we live on both sides of the border  
in two countries  
in and outside each other  
bone and blood  
in disguise without intention or force  
without blandishments  
blown by wind  
silent like shadow crossing and crossing  
over the boundaries without end  
borne by moon or sun  
burnished by wing

## **wave**

in the twilight of forest  
in layers  
where limb tangles with limb  
under ash trees, inside leaf

green spheres, under fallen  
trees with crowns touching ground  
around upended roots  
through dark trunks into streams

both the hollow and crest  
rolling over stones  
into caverns, around hidden turns  
light and deep

**red**

red has earth in it, blood  
in it, the sun and Mars and dreams  
iron and grain and grist from the mill  
a redbird, a wing feather from a blackbird  
redpoll, cardinal, cedar waxwing  
a fragrance, heaviness  
apple, pepper, persimmon, pomegranate  
thorn-apple, high-bush cranberry, rose hips  
inside the body in it, fallen pine needles  
falling leaves, a bank of coals, fire  
and tail lights and stop signs and flags for the mail  
resin and amber and lava in its core  
bee balm and heirloom roses  
tomatoes and hickory and stain  
wetness and passion and wool  
and rubies and agates — source of rain



## encounter

for the bear  
freedom is bound by what it can scavenge  
it lives by opportunity  
is curious

for a woman in this world  
freedom is bound by fear  
it has its own body and sound  
a distortion

to walk on a dark street  
go through some door

once I met my fear  
upon the street  
once at home under a raised fist  
that moment stands on its feet

I pull myself away  
make a larger circle  
see a life eaten by fear itself  
go into cloud, cross the border

to thunder and release  
return to soothe the body

re-enter each and every day  
on an unfamiliar road  
bring myself here  
use the voice you know  
it has teeth

## rough tongue

rough tongue, wild one  
I awoke to you washing me  
the friction of your tongue  
pulling at my skin

your teeth are smooth ivories  
you are capable of biting  
but don't  
it's how we live these days

rasping to each other  
I turn my belly to you  
throw back my head  
I could become your prey

but don't, I trust you  
and you me although  
I'm another predator  
sly and hungry

can growl and hiss and fight  
although not with you  
when you stroke me like this  
it almost hurts

## body of a bear

the body of a bear has its own  
hill and valley  
soot made of fallen stars  
coal deep hungers

the body has its own sea  
no moon upon the waters  
a time and tide

the body hides both shadow and light  
rises from its tracks  
comes to me shaggy and curious

brings its ear  
to the silence, tooth and claw  
foraging

from the swamp and thicket  
river corridor to the road to the door  
voiceless

once I was alone  
once I thought my path was never  
crossed by magic

## juneberries

you've left  
carrying a wooden bowl  
alongside the road —  
it's such a hot day  
over ninety  
the juneberries are ripe  
I know you stand  
before the laden bush  
grasping each blue purple berry  
with your fingers  
no one passes by  
the berries are at their peak  
and you, intent, tasting  
what you'll bring  
from here I follow the berries  
that go to your lips  
and the ones that fall  
in the bowl  
rolling in the round bottom  
uncountable  
and your fingers  
not very far  
it's such a hot day  
over ninety  
and the juneberries are ripe

## body of a woman

the body of a woman  
has startling darkness  
eternal hunger  
lives concealed  
her vision might blur  
but not the sense of smell  
she follows, not touch  
at berry time  
her young find what she finds  
they come sleeping  
during the season of sleep  
follow her into deep thickets  
up trees  
in margins  
she becomes fierce  
her memory has slashed  
the bark of trees

## spectrum

the bear  
is obsidian held fast  
inside a mirror  
its light plunged into darkness  
like coal before  
diamonds  
dark that emanates  
an aura beyond night  
a universe without stars  
shining on a shipless sea  
without shores

## following

The black of the bear  
is the black of a pupil  
which emits no light but takes it in  
to the retina.

The encounter of a bear is ocular.  
I have never felt, smelled  
or touched a bear  
only seen some  
only heard one bawling.  
The others were silent, in motion.

I can't understand time.  
If I moved, the past I left  
transmitted into photographs  
black and white.  
As a child, I turned  
the black pages of the photo album  
to the picture fixed in black corners  
of my father's uncle Theodore  
and his dog. The dog was nursing  
beaver kits.

I keep this moment of love  
before his suicide.  
Everything changes.

Fear affects the pupils of the eye  
emits no light but takes it in  
works like a shutter  
freezes the image.

My father worked midnights  
drove a black Oldsmobile  
kicked black tires.  
He was smudged with soot  
his fingernails stained  
with grease, fed me  
in the red kitchen chair  
fearful stories of bears  
only to keep me safe.

Now bears show themselves to me  
cross the roads I'm on  
enter the field  
eat the berries I would eat  
turn their heads so that I can see  
their ears in silhouette.

I wear black, roam the countryside  
love rising in my breast  
to face all of them,  
the beautiful, fearful bears.  
Fifty years and more  
I have lived in the north, in the woods  
and dreaded what needed love  
the emulsion  
and source of light  
the enduring motion.



## isn't enough

the world isn't enough  
and prayer without destination  
travels  
across the margins  
and binding  
into another country  
and verse  
words aren't enough  
you need reaching  
into the suspension  
of dragonfly  
and hawk and cloud  
to meet  
the wild rose and the holy  
rising up  
from the luminous hill

## berries

The hottest days of summer  
bring you back  
berry picking time. Thorny  
raspberry canes scratch  
as they drop their red fruit

at my feet.  
Life used to be complete.  
Yes it was unbearable  
heat and a misery of flies.

Dishes have broken.  
I gave away so much  
the marriages and summers  
some things I didn't know  
that held my spirit

like you once did.  
It was dry ground  
but also ripening.  
I gather every ripe berry  
stain and tongue.

## without the body

an eagle rides the wind  
above a ribcage of deer  
vertebra fasten into the long grass  
of the ditch

without the body  
spirit folds like steam or mist

at the center  
the wind sings inside  
a long loneliness no word can abate

the broad wing-stroke and curved beak  
navigate by coordinates

near and far and to her nest  
made of sticks and mud and pitch

a small tail feather drifts  
upon a spotted fawn hidden in the trees  
a wood thrush calls

entrails, marsh marigold, lupine  
dandelion fluff, broken glass, blood  
flies swarm in the sun

at the wide and narrow gate  
where loss hinges on gain

opens into the balance  
dissolves like rain

## sub-boreal

I carry the broken and bent  
that lean out from symmetry

sub-boreal cold  
bone without marrow

leafless crowns waiting for storm  
to come down

the narrow gate  
into wide fields of cloud cover

shadow after loss  
uneven slope  
roots in the constellation of star moss

dead fall and beginnings of river  
whispers and rifts  
steady rain through the night

stones broken from higher  
cathedrals where spruce hold  
empty nests

stars aim those flights  
quiver and bow and arrow of wild geese

## voice

through the mouth of the bear  
through the scroll of birch bark  
without syntax or vocabularies  
with sharp teeth  
from the deepest place  
through every hair of the body  
through eyes and hands reaching  
for weapons or instruments  
or sensitive scales  
in vibrations timbers sighs  
heard inside or beside  
waves from the wind  
or quake at the bottom of the lake  
from the darkness of a cave  
a history lost or jettisoned  
our own

## spine

this delicate stack  
won't collapse  
beneath the weight of sky

a carriage of linkages  
heart and lungs  
my own beliefs

on the spine everything  
must balance

made out of saplings  
harboring wings  
out of minerals and roots  
questions and light  
clear ringed breathing

open to the wind  
without toppling  
open to flame  
without annihilation of fire

built of bone  
and sinew and blood  
bending and swaying

## wild

whatever you are is a gift

an hour of musk  
dark fur, an hour of fallen leaves  
an hour that is mine I give to you

whatever has not been taken

you fall into sleep  
when snow covers the land  
and dreams fly south  
to new territories

enter the other  
world from your den  
go in alone  
come out as two

your call is a language  
I can not speak  
that opens a vault  
I have no shelter from

what shadow shines  
through your being

what burns like a stone  
through this life  
what have I found?

wrapped in shadow  
seeking solitude  
alert to new worlds' violent ways

you rise from the tangle of roots  
I walk over you

listen to the upward drifting  
night

two stars shine on



## pine

my home is made of lights  
in the pine  
it takes my weight  
sways when I climb

bends in the wind  
when I'm underneath  
my home is made of tangles  
fruit out of reach

inside are hymns  
in the circling of years  
in the roots  
knives that pierce the stone

need to go that far  
to get that deep  
water falling clear  
made of dark without walls

made of sleep  
seeds encased in cones  
my home  
my berth

## season of sleep

below cold drift  
excavated winter iron ground  
roots and leaves

bear turns in her cave  
as bent in the wind boughs rub  
until they're worn and break

into blind beginning, pushes  
in the underground womb  
vowel without consonant

layered stone with pomegranate  
far-fetched honey  
red rose camellia

her breath lifts matted fur  
tumbling from summer's mate  
where rack and friction

finally gasp and glisten  
what was not there to give but given  
wrapped in the folding

night tied with star's thread deep  
scars in crimson arrive  
mouths sweet as blessings

## absence

I don't have to see —  
it's enough to know  
you go into the forest  
around me

sleep on the roots  
of an unknown tree  
wake in a sunlit meadow

you've made your mark

gratitude rises like roots  
that cross stones  
streams meander along slopes  
shadows deepen

we walk our separate paths  
in each other's footprints  
hold the silence

whatever falls here falls  
into it, whatever springs up  
fills it, we abide here without want  
flow beside flow

## honey

in the memory of honey  
the door where we kissed  
a wave at the window  
combing and braiding yellow  
orange red blue blossom  
white petal black stamen  
in the wax, memory of waning  
of sunlit spooning  
clamber of a small body  
drawing the milk down  
of walking on cushions  
invisible roads  
in the memory of palm  
of tongue of lips of fingertips  
heat and sting  
beginning with hunger  
ending with sleep  
in the memory of clover  
you beginning with seed  
ending with earth

## opposites

here I love you  
along a road where the journey turns back  
upon itself

clouds in the sky have no attachment  
but search for mountains to the west or  
on the other side

amid the rising summer, columbine, daisy, paintbrush  
there is the mark of rain  
tire track, foot print, bear

the silence is filled with birds  
at this moment, we are between green walls  
in a double weave  
sometimes I fall into a dream in the sunlight

lay my cheek on your shoulder, against muscle  
sometimes I climb on your back  
and journey into both worlds

find strawberries under the leaves

love travels by foot along two roads

wing

## memory migration

Across the summers  
through corridors of fluttering aspen  
and birdsong, I rode a bicycle  
along empty roads under a clear sky  
crossed by turtles' relentless journeys  
towards the ponds and dragonflies  
games of tag, dogs chasing  
passing cars, entering the funnel cloud  
of dust floating above the river  
through the pines where birds flit  
on the branches building nests  
feeding the young, hurrying on to flights  
longer and farther across the borders.  
The roads had no end, only yearning.  
This was the north, the clouds were a language  
that cast its shadows on hills, still unpeopled  
mornings carried the sounds of trains  
history was still coming.

## traveling light

at night, passing cars' headlights  
cast a square of light  
that peeled from the window  
above my bed and coursed around the room

when I was very small  
below my mother's face

wrapped in a yarn tied quilt  
two sides of the same stitch  
her breath my breath

the light blurred as if it were made  
of smoke  
with pine branches  
etched on its panes

searching the four corners  
of my room  
before sleep and after  
when she was out dancing

dreams cast their bright  
green and bounced the light  
swished like horse tails  
jet streams and sun's

red-gold ignitions  
behind the lifted silhouette of wings



taking me  
as I lay suspended on the distant music  
door after door closed

as one by one the years  
peeled off  
flew into the wind

my mother  
the house the land  
other worlds emerged underneath  
wore down to a thread

in the coming of age layer after layer lifts  
deep lines carved by the past  
open like a crevasse  
until the frame shifts and falls in

open to sky's brilliant  
stream

## fluency

When I was small, I had no word for it.  
It sifted in the Minnesota woods, in wind  
whispering above me in the pine boughs  
and waited inside the dark seeds ready

to split their hulls and stand up  
like spring, green in the sun.  
It sprouted like potatoes  
in the cold cellar and in the ground

grazed with all the mares.  
It was stacked in the sunlit dust  
of the hay barn  
and rusted with the car bodies

abandoned in the field  
played on the burial mounds  
walked over stories kept from me  
and slept on the shores of all the lakes.

It rubbed between my immigrant grandmother  
who couldn't speak English  
and me who couldn't speak Finnish.  
It ticked itself from the clock

rose like yeast that lifted the dough  
in heat to bread. It wound in the yarn  
she slipped with a hook, washed  
through all the linens

swelled like the sister  
beneath my mother's apron  
entered through the pores  
of my skin and pushed out as breasts

pumped through my veins  
and bled between my legs  
slid beneath my skirt and buttoned  
in my blouse. It steeped in my cup

floated in the church singing its hymns  
repeated its vows in sentences  
that trailed off  
before too much could be said.

It was the echo of silence  
before the storm and after  
I heard it nights from inside the walls  
later, in the backseats of cars

and from cattail beds  
in hawks' wings over the Divide —  
where rivers split  
into fast tongues.

## rapture

Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds

north of town by the railway bridge  
a man opens the midden heaps  
near the tracks south of Biwabik  
swinging his metal detector back and forth  
over the graves of battered teapots  
old bottles of Lydia Pinkham's Home Remedy  
looking for silver and gold

nearby the town cemetery  
wrought iron gates open  
to the grid of sealed graves  
beneath a stand of Norways  
that give way to the lake  
carrying the midnight voices  
of teenagers parked in the lanes  
sealed inside the cars  
without headlights  
behind steamed windows  
drinking beer, pulling down zippers  
shedding jeans like snakes' skins  
delirious, urging themselves on  
crying, crying, oh!  
to be so oblivious to the dead

I think of them now —  
voices fluent with life  
the call of the train  
oh, the many ways we rise

**was it I**

who drank from  
the springs in the headwaters  
trampled tradition  
escaping the small town  
or the mine the men the thefts  
joined the union and strikes  
or swam through water-filled mine pits  
snuck past gates trains conveyors  
furnaces beer cans bottle filled weekends  
portaged through chains of lakes  
drifted through culverts below railroad tracks  
beneath the bridge of language  
past locations inebriated  
no man no woman no grandchild  
of the Divide wanting  
lessons from libraries or schools  
that came down by arson  
not banker or engineer or driver  
of cars that rolled in the ditches  
not miner with cows or chickens  
or cats in the barn  
hay cut and put up for winter  
not the wife with the pressure cooker  
who sealed green beans in the jars  
not the gas station attendant or candy store  
owner or lifeguard or seamstress  
stitching scraps of cloth  
not husband or lover or lake  
who broke it off seeped in the ground  
evaporated

got in the car and kept going  
through the streets of rain  
free love and tokes of weed and war  
and war at the corner  
of a movie theater and real  
at the corner of never coming back  
of dawn and dead of night  
of erosion and accretion  
through lock and dam  
nervous breakdown and exhilaration  
listening to broken records old tapes new  
at the place where friends desert you  
through any channel on any road  
through the gutters and sewers  
not seeing stars for the light  
nor bounds because gorgeous  
unrestrained rides of your life  
around the bend  
was — is within reach  
at the edge surging  
into waves on the beach  
moonlit white capped deep  
shadow and silver or tin or stainless  
long lines lifting bending  
with roots that hold down a city  
or a country or the earth  
beginning beginning  
nothing is as good as  
voices of bells ringing in the places  
where towers have fallen  
lightning and flood now search and rescue  
in the rising water broken city

what I took for sunrise  
calls like migrations sounds like wind  
piercing all I could ask was for more  
to carry it through  
churning in my wake everything  
changing throat and ear  
wild abandon vibration echo  
collisions of notes or clouds  
pushed by wind and gravity  
sideways to go off course  
find the place in stone  
see in the sky an opening  
to moon through star-scape  
give to the last coin and accept  
union as grace  
if it was an accident never the same  
uncover recover gain  
over the obstacles  
past ordinary stops to the place of sky  
no longer with veins or edges  
continuous simply leaf and twig  
falling shadow given to trees  
to someone faraway who comes in pain  
turns into waves pounding on shore  
unmeasured in its own rhythm  
keeping aloft the only part of love  
not fixed but divine  
given without expectation  
pouring in the distance from far

river that comes up in all of our feet  
falls from our hands  
into the loom without frame  
weave of sheer or wind or unwinding



## velocity

One driver stops in the rain  
lifts a broken wing  
on the street outside the house.  
He moves two ducks  
one dead, feathers spilled and floating  
across the lanes, one wounded.

Endless traffic flows along the highway  
drivers and passengers sealed up  
in a hurry, on the phone, distracted  
making lists, spilling coffee.

I watch, close to being severed myself.  
My grandfather in his grave  
plays his violin.  
I hear him beneath the ground  
playing everything that has fallen  
in the leaf mold and black dirt  
and silence.

The wounded bird sways  
next to the body of its mate.  
A woman came  
and wrapped the wounded  
with a blanket and carried it  
in her arms like a baby  
gave it back to the water.

My grandfather plays the violin  
to nobody who is listening.  
He plays to the stones  
who say nothing.  
He plays to the rivers and to the sky.  
Only the lifting wings keep his rhythm.

## woman, river

A woman was leaving  
the river ran over stones  
in its bed, around bends.  
He was still sleeping.

It was morning, she  
was gathering things into  
her suitcase. River was murmuring  
but she didn't hear

because the time was near,  
she was taking things off her list.  
The leaves in the trees  
were restless. Rain was coming.

She could only take so much  
what she could carry  
and wouldn't be missed  
A little bit of cash.

She used to play under the bridge  
where the water wandered  
as if it weren't going anywhere  
where sun distilled the leaves into tea

where she had picnics  
in the shade. The river combed  
the grass, braided her hair  
into its current, shook her free.

She touched bottom  
put her weight down, closed  
the latch. Not a match  
the violence.

In its silence the river took  
those days out to sea  
who knew where  
she would cross or when —

the woman next door  
knocked and gave her a book  
pages torn, repaired with tape  
a little something tucked inside

saved her, simply.  
She waved from another shore  
couldn't say goodbye  
made her escape.

## door

My mother stood at the counter  
tapped an egg  
against the rim of the metal bowl  
and emptied the broken halves.

Nothing else holds together  
with such perfect seamlessness  
nor is so fragile.

I was at the table with a box of crayons  
watching. I drew a house, a tree  
a big sun. She took the whisk to stir  
the batter. The door held a secret  
every time somebody passed through  
something changed.  
She bent down to give the little dog a treat.

I was outside, repairing my mascara.  
I was bringing home the baby  
as she poured batter  
on a hot griddle and turned the thin cakes  
stacked them on a plate.

We washed the dishes.  
Through that door one day  
went she, the little dog, my home.

It was never simple  
feast or flight.

## dozen

I've broken some dreams I've had  
those sold by the dozen  
that come in a box

perfect in their places, mute.  
It gives me a certain pleasure  
to choose the right one

and smash it against the metal rim  
to pry them open  
let the thwarted birds fry

and myself feast.  
Even the halved and broken shells  
emptied of their jewels, glisten.

## between two shores

What is the eagle stealing  
as its long wings  
grasp and climb the wind  
far up in the silence  
with two birds chasing?

On the highway  
beneath the ascending flights  
tangling dark birds in pursuit.

Already too late, already the swaying  
shadows fail and outwit the tender watch.

What rides on an eagle's indifferent motion  
in the rising thermal currents as the sun glances

off the wide surface of the lake  
what waves or sky or emptiness?  
What is the news  
what wars are beginning  
what are the eagles dreaming  
as streams tumble down the granite face  
break free from the hill, gain flight

what breaks free  
arrives at its destination?

## grow free

I wait for my sister —  
pussy willows then single blades  
of green appeared  
amid the straw. Next catkins lengthened  
on the branches  
we walked below. Sometimes between  
a bellwort blooms  
as we wander through balsam trees.  
She is trying to get away.

One day the hawk's gaze  
from an overhead wire  
fell on me. The next day I found a wing  
on the road, broken hinge  
bloody bare — after that a rabbit crossed  
my path pursued by a wolf into the thicket  
neither glanced back.  
God speed. Nothing more.

A few days later, I pass another  
beheaded rabbit  
abandoned to the crows.  
We don't imagine the worst, even her.  
She doesn't let herself see.  
The buds open out into leaves  
asparagus rises. I eat the chives'  
hollow spears at the table —



a deer followed. My dog finds its sleek hoof.  
We go on, amid the evidence  
find marsh marigolds at spring streams  
new planted trees.  
The lilacs bud, we count the blooms.

## coffee

My mother lit the burner  
beneath the glass coffee pot  
on the stove. I could hear the blue flame  
water began to bubble  
push itself up the slender glass stem  
into the glass lid, rain down  
into the glass basket, darken the brew.  
I set the table, put out a plate of sweets.  
Company comes, they leave  
the kitchen's dark, then gone.  
Forty years have passed.  
Nothing's the same  
but let's drink some coffee.  
We like it dark, even darker.  
I like to see it so clear.  
Coffee tastes more round  
when cooked in the glass percolator.

## pretend

I used to be good at pretend —  
once, mixing mud and water  
to make a cake  
for my dolls.  
I would trade  
with my cousin Ervin  
play war for house  
scattering the tiny green soldiers  
and guns in the sand —  
we were also the Red Cross.  
Now I've become so rusty.  
It didn't work to stir up my mother  
from the chicken baskets  
on top of the fridge  
with three chicks  
that hide inside their mother.  
She gave me crayons  
still coloring the map,  
made wings for my son  
so he could fly.  
I need her cloak and  
disappearing ink, the candle  
and book with Little Red Hen  
who plants the seeds and reaps  
the wheat and eats the bread —  
if it's not too late to get help.

## breathe

once I wanted words to become a bridge  
built of lost years

the line that holds the sky  
upon the water  
with concrete pylons sunk deep below the river  
lifting to the flight of cranes

wanted words like iron rails to carry freight  
as I trembled beneath

but the day they wandered upon the bridge  
gazing down  
like I have done, lost in dreams of light  
I could not warn them

the boy racing like wind the girl behind  
could not save them  
unable to find their speed, unable to fling  
themselves to safety  
brakes smoking burning  
in the face of unstoppable violence  
they were overtaken, broken, spilled —

words become unspeakable —

so now I disassemble myself  
pull away from the sun silvering the tracks  
fall into the bloom of algae  
erase lines as we watch helpless  
upon the same shore—

surrender them to bees, yellow blooms  
rafts of lily pads rooted but floating

## grandmother rising

my grandmother's heart grows inside my body  
into vine and leaf that winds like a wreath  
from all the hungers and empty places  
from never again

my grandmother's rage in my abdomen  
the secrets, the pain  
burn like wood rising in a flame  
her fires shift in the grate

her hands lift the spindles over the lace  
that reached down once to caress my face  
for years I've heard the stitching  
of her sewing machine

a longing that reached across a border  
into a language I couldn't speak —

## in translation

the name of the river  
has fallen into another river  
Zambini-nimi

names are buried by falling leaves  
as the next rise from the roots

in your words, another people  
the settlers displaced

in violence is a silence  
a river only has its mouth  
never saves itself

we know the boundary  
the harbor in each breath  
the shores

but not between  
in the currents  
journey is erased

we carry a map and a book  
say these are the stones

cross a bridge into memory  
everything here  
will be pulled down by gravity

while below  
the high water mark  
a river gone

## isoaiti

in her house long after it's fallen  
at the end of a long country road

I pull the chain from the light  
touch worn fabric wooden arm  
by the kerosene stove

see from window's threshold  
limbs that held me when I climbed  
and lifting bird's wing  
landing from here and there  
to the clothesline (sheets taken in)

or roof of a house that turned its face  
aside dust and heat sunlit doorway  
unzipped rubber boots  
on the grit of dark porch stairs  
dog barking against

the sound of an old clock ticking  
marking quarter hours  
water falling in the basin  
coffee pot purring  
worn thin disintegrating

she uses the flax now flowering  
to weave me into her again  
gives me blessings of wind  
in the trees



lights in the dark  
of her hallways  
gives me verses in an unknown tongue  
lights the star that holds a spark

beginning in silence's furthest gift  
follows a broken circle  
through the curtains of northern light  
gathering planting feeding losing  
offers a drink from crimson  
roses and stills

a sip of meandering  
a cup of smoke  
tart raspberries and brandy  
birds' intoxications  
starlight from a dipper extended

tender palm and perpetual  
dreaming pendulum

## blizzard

do you hear  
how the wind blows, bringing snow  
broken trees that block the drive

drifts of toys in childhood mist  
from years of Christmas past  
easily torn wrap

corkscrew ribbons red curls  
cookies piped with frosting  
sprinkled with colored sugar

blowing around the eaves  
my father's breath, smell  
of brandy, my mother's perfume

a house filled with strangers  
in another landscape and my own bundle  
of baby, pale flannel and pillows

traveling by car and boat  
to music, no end to the swaying  
crosscurrents and eddies

all slant and upward and down  
can I make it into gingerbread  
hang the ornaments and tinsel

bring into love's clasp every bite  
pull close and hold each winter  
open my hand  
savor awake before it's lost  
or broken, in every circle  
ask the bird singing in the cold

its heart, this time a shattered icicle  
a snow globe  
feast we live inside

amazing how one gift opens  
into another and then memory  
blows from the northeast

waves turn into snow —  
isn't it precisely brief  
and long melancholy?

## thread

she makes a world tonight

in her hands  
small sticks in an unstable loom

seeming mindless under the light  
makes a stocking from another unraveling  
the broken un-used misfit  
part of an old skein used yarn

steep wall of language  
like a slipped stitch this pain each hole  
a line running down to emptiness  
to her it doesn't matter

reason for fallen stitches, internal fault  
reason for earthquake or malignancy

inattention, accident or mysterious design  
unknown lengths  
she counts with her fingertips

dreams or violent longings  
taken with a mild and luminous motion

like many grandmothers begins  
increasing at this point on the map  
soothing fills her lap, comes to peace, using

the only end within reach

## broken line

forgive me  
if I hurt you  
it was an accident  
the continuous thread  
pulled by my needle  
that pierced your skin  
drew a drop of blood  
that bloomed  
like a tear  
a tiny strawberry stain  
you were sweet  
there were rivers  
between us  
one day I went too deep  
had to undo  
the seam we'd made  
take out the stitches  
start over again

## bridge

a black crow flies  
then three  
into the forest of my grandmother

in the tangles  
words of a song she sang  
scattered like children  
or implements

hay rake pitchfork shovel  
disk milk can cream separator  
sold at auction

the wind goes  
to the place where she came

where she once held me  
where everything was understood  
in the circle of her arms  
the dog  
even a foreign sea

in the field a fallen barn  
an empty rib cage of deer  
the leaves whisper

of the journey  
on the road that turns to bridge

— it's morning on the other side of the world  
while I write this  
the sun has come up tomorrow

## under wing

if she was wing to me  
    an arrow in the cloud  
if she was eye to me  
    and light's vector  
if I followed her voice  
    climbed in wind before settling  
if she was hand to me  
    then it was feather  
if she was hip then she was tree to me  
    as much root as swaying crown  
if she couldn't be drawn  
    she was vast to me  
if her death  
    took down the last of her shelter  
if I was lifted  
    she was blowing northeasterly  
if she was lost  
    I couldn't dream of her journey  
in my canopy  
    wrapped by my weavings  
if someday you ask why  
    or how can it be  
I will answer, come fly to me  
    and then fly after



## peeling apples

In my own kitchen  
at the counter  
surrounded by apples  
I pull off the stem one by one  
where it attached to the tree  
run my knife blade  
beneath the skin  
round and round  
peel off a spiral of time  
come and gone.  
This time, the pie is for  
my son, his grandmother  
who has passed  
and the man I'd married  
and left, for the family.  
Apples always remind me  
of hearts. Shorn, they reveal  
some bruises.  
It was a difficult divorce  
but not everything I had feared  
happened. It's been  
twenty years past.  
I cut the apples in half —  
then quarters. The tears  
I pry out  
with the tip of the blade  
to be thrown into the compost.  
I fill the brown bowl  
add the sugar and cinnamon  
roll out the pie crust

making a circle  
in what will inevitably  
be sliced.  
I wonder now where  
are the lines?  
From my oven  
the smell of burnt sugar  
and apples  
sweet and whole.

## not forgotten

I learned to ride  
the two wheel bicycle  
with my father.  
He oiled the chain  
clothes-pinned playing cards  
to the spokes, put on the basket  
to carry my lunch.  
By his side, I learned balance  
and took on speed  
centered behind the wide  
handlebars, my hands  
on the white grips  
my feet pedaling.  
One moment he was  
holding me up  
and the next moment  
although I didn't know it  
he had let go.  
When I wobbled, suddenly  
afraid, he yelled *keep going* —  
*keep going!*  
Beneath the trees in the driveway  
the distance increasing between us  
I eventually rode until he was out of sight.  
I counted on him.

That he could hold me was a given  
that he could release me was a gift.

## magic

at twilight in early summer  
on a road in the country —  
I saw a girl standing outside  
a run-down farm  
in front of the machinery  
and yawning dark doorway of a gray barn —  
she was wearing  
a worn denim jacket  
over a long pink ruffled skirt —  
staring down at the satin as if  
she didn't recognize herself or realize  
that her thorny stem  
ragged leaves or feet in the dirt  
were leading up to one thing, herself  
once tightly closed  
suddenly with petals, blooming

## my father

My father is outdoors  
all things everywhere  
show the work of his hand  
the swing, dog's house  
fences around the garden  
the tame edge of forest.

He is an engine that throbs  
like a tractor.  
If I call to him, he won't hear me  
he is herding clouds  
along the sky, trundling the moon  
around in darkness  
tying the dogs up for the night.

From the window, I look  
into the dark at the edge of light  
into silence when the barking dies down.

When we have turned off the lights  
except for one on the stove  
he will come in. When we are sleeping  
when his work is done  
he'll take the bread we've made.  
Like faith, when we are dreaming

hearing his footstep  
him at the table.

## in the factory canteen

painting by Ruslan Andreevich Kobozev

after the shift, cleaned up  
he finds a table  
in the industrial twilight amid smoke  
and fire stacks  
gazes at the woman serving  
or her tray, the steaming bowl of soup  
play of light  
he holds a slab of bread, hunger

or desire —

she wears a watch  
brings intently as they take  
drops her gaze  
makes her trades  
fills her apron pocket with coins  
amid the clatter of spoons and dishes  
goes about the tables of men  
meets his eyes  
with a glass half empty, half full

## casualty of the underground mine

the man who lived in a tree  
stretched on a limb  
in the rain or wind  
would not descend

reached into the sky  
because he couldn't sleep  
for waking

would not mend  
because what he lost  
would not return

because he had been too deep  
and it was difficult to breathe

because there are many ways  
to be at home

he could hear the northern lights  
he crossed the border for his reasons  
the man who lived in a tree  
needed rocking of a different cradle

because some things have no language  
and what he had to say  
needed birds in flight

## sheets

washed of the bodies' oils  
wet sheets twisted and wound into roses

that filled the baskets my mother  
and I once carried from the galvanized tubs  
from the wringer and tiny wheels running

in the subterranean darkness  
outside to the thirsty air  
like promises strung across the span

clipped with wooden spindles  
corner to corner  
releasing lovers' dreams

that snapped in the wind to fill like sails  
above the leaves of grass and fallen pinecones

while the dog went about secret errands  
and the cat came with small sacrifices to lay at our feet

line after line of the fabric worn thin  
stained with wine or blood  
bleached by moonlight and waves  
from the fathoms we've crossed

now without her  
I pull in sheets from the lilac air  
like a fisherman pulling in nets  
filled with a catch of sun



## banners

I call my garden  
what comes up without intention

lift the latch  
walk among wild roses  
columbine  
along the paths of other beings

call what softens the seeds  
to be broken from the inside  
what bends, unfurls  
hoists tiny bells to ring  
over the leaves

lifts the weight of air  
daisies and fireweed

even though I pull  
thistle roots  
cut away the deadfall

call gift, the weeds  
white blossoms that opened  
as we spoke, keep opening

## sculpture

perhaps love is borne of stone  
that slept in the earth

hewn by a vision  
circling the marble's  
unknowable dimensions

incited from breath's measures  
or instinct

sculpted by hand  
knowing fine veins or grain

what emerges  
breathes not this air, but another

perhaps love is willingness  
to break open the stone

hammer chisel rasp  
risk its ruin  
make only dust

every measured blow  
a force that frees the body  
every strike

a call to the other world  
to come

## unnamed

not the poem  
but a topographical map of the body

a carving or summoning  
spell or liturgy  
a bit of shelter I carry around  
so I can sleep in beautiful places

a document of loss  
unfinished  
sort of a reversed obituary  
scratched by a quill or etched like frost

not the poem, the begetting  
voices who can't be seen  
or the curious light between  
letters or lines like rain darkened  
tree trunks or stones  
split like lightning

migration

## refraction

after ice-out on Crow Lake  
when my son was small  
muskies came in the bay

from the other world  
barred and mud colored  
small fins whirring

as they moored their long bodies  
near the dock  
we lifted the tackle

stared into cold water  
to the ribs of lake bottom  
through cloud shadows and glancing

surfaces before his father and I  
split and divided  
dangled in front of the fathomless

bending weeds  
and drowned mayflies  
the lure on long filament

beside an empty rocking boat  
released and reeled  
the hook concealed by a minnow's body

into the muskie silence  
that clear bright day  
over the border

years later  
I put my hand in the water  
the mirrored hand passed through

as if light through light  
the muskies suspended  
bait went in came out drifted

in their open jaws  
too ancient or canny to bite  
trouble or blessing

## love

at first I didn't know  
if it was a bell that rang in the church tower  
or a parade  
a book returned after long absence  
or part of myself  
half of a prayer  
or if it was a war that called us up  
or a circle we walked in when we were lost  
I didn't know it was a road  
that could erase every trace  
like a sea that parted  
not just any story  
that opened and took me in  
but one that gathered the shards  
of broken glass and set them like diamonds  
into a life I didn't know was music

## road

I was a road  
traveling destinations not my own  
an escape, an exit, a promise  
bringer of bridges  
a story with no clear beginning  
or end increased by telling  
I was the merging  
and lulled plenitude  
with semaphore and symbol  
amid miles  
leading and following  
opening and opening  
a route of oncoming lights  
rain and brakes and radio waves  
way of anonymous occupants  
lost in reality  
crossed by the wild and invisible  
not home but alternate  
not vision but place of daydream and collision



## two worlds

I crossed through a mirror  
in one world people were leaving  
in the other, arriving

on the other side, the ancestors'  
face in mine  
as if through a fire's light

spark to tinder, coals to ash  
as if through the herring in the sea  
through memory's country

through clouds to the land  
over the border  
my name on their stones

words resurface  
walk the same walk  
under the same stars

footsteps over footsteps  
at the table, sing a hymn  
in the old tongue

I go forward and back  
return the journey  
the road is the road

ten rivers into the Baltic  
ten into the inland sea  
the longest distance

to the farthest point —  
calling to each other  
the past and future finally meet

## departure's gift

I hold a thoroughfare  
of light falling through the pines  
unfolding stripe of shadow

sky etched by cloud

tables filled with leavings  
wheat for the bread  
strawberries for the jam

paths through houses  
gardens that were not my gardens  
hands that held me awhile  
before moving away

cupboards cannot close it in  
mirrors don't reflect  
rooms can't contain  
paper cannot map  
all the things given up

even the body

leaves to the wind  
seeds to the field

back ways to fallen barns  
where owls call out in the dark

how emptiness comes to the brim

## across the border

you arrive  
in the stomp and slide  
of boots outside  
in the papers and boxes and coils of rope  
smell of soap  
through an open window  
in the sound of knives and spoons and forks  
but when I look, all the cups  
are stacked in a row  
and sounds echo  
in the chambers and vessels and metals  
across borders into music and silence  
and then into birds  
I find your touch  
in wool washed in cold and hung to dry  
tracked in my flower beds and snow drifts  
and photographs of the old  
creameries and camps and co-op houses  
know you are passing into other lives  
through clouds over the pine horizon  
in the sun coming back  
into a new life  
with silver keys in the mailbox  
into the world further and further  
on the shore of the seas and in the vapors  
to and from a satellite  
past the planets  
into the papers of books I've yet  
to write and translate back  
into the language of trees

## street musician

you play upon the street  
filled with low notes and stones  
vibrating slowly, your strings are rivers  
rushing down the slope

bird calls from the swamps  
strange lights shining afar  
ladders that extend  
to regions that I wait for

departures, bridges  
with loose planks and rivets  
you play the tattoo parlor  
have stained me without ink

your strings are roads  
that connect to the highway  
miles I haven't gone  
your strings are machines

that run in factories, whistles  
that start and stop the work  
sirens that scream down the dark  
avenue past quick and silent exchanges

by strangers or the light  
slowly changing in rooms  
glances between people on the street  
your strings are the train tracks

going out of town  
the cables buried under ground  
benches where the homeless sleep  
the pier where waves break

and the lonely wait upon the horizon  
ships that ply the harbor  
veins that hold iron and blood  
sinews attaching muscle to bone

the wrenches, pliers  
and hammers working  
cities upon the same long river  
barges carrying freight through lock and gate

prayers that rise up  
in the churches and in the bowery  
to the clouds moving  
as you move your hands

## in green

I live in a chamber  
of sound in a garden a field of clover  
I live in a frond a fathom a future  
in a stem a bow a string  
in a breath a bird in its wing

I live on the stairs  
under wraps  
in books with pages open listening  
pouring tea from a pot I once had  
into a shadow remembering

in an opening  
that won't serve any longer to catch  
unfurled streaming yet  
trawling the ocean of dark currents  
in a storm that had raged so long  
I went down

I live in a window-well  
in closed spaces on broken eggshells  
where I have never been  
at crosswalks shops  
on a street that goes down to the sea

I live along a path  
that tapers into gravel  
small stones broken by beginning  
reaching back and forth for light  
pulling against the weight  
of the open sky

in agreen that gathers the evening  
the way light takes it in  
with graves on both sides  
on a road with washouts and frost heaves  
by wild rose petals lit and red clover  
filled with rain

I live in a place I haven't seen  
where bottles driftwood  
clouds fog the bottom of things  
in green the way it quells  
the stark stone

enters water on shore  
in drifts and blooms  
and stem after stem  
in endless branching  
a green ruinous and full of roses

near the sea in a dream  
with magnified stones  
drawn through its rippling surface  
held in daybreak nightfall  
somewhere between



## migrations

in resurrection, there is confusion —H.D.

near shore another story  
places that no longer know me  
shifting stones of memory

seen and unseen rivers  
not knowing whether it's birth  
or death

restless wind broken ice shelf  
wolves running deer  
clouds building towers

between two distant poles  
holding back, letting go  
irresistible winged and dark streams

rising interior maps  
north and south, equal  
opposing, departures

unaccounted for  
a lone lonely flying over  
no longer owned except by wind

or inevitable turning  
whether there is a god or  
a darkness that draws green leafed

into sky scrawls  
along the earth, spills into  
snowmelt and lake and wing

upward light that draws urge and flight  
no matter the form  
abandon might take

mirrored in the waters  
reversals returning  
waves climbing over themselves

resurrecting what goes into root  
lost into found, blurred, hungering  
surrender

## waking

I woke in the night  
as an echo  
returned part of my life

woke when it came back with light  
and trembling of leaves  
came back as rain

woke in the farthest place  
where we met  
above clouds and shadows  
in the blue arch

each heart beat a small drum  
wound spring dissipating  
each moment turning gone

as if a dream  
woke in the night

a voice of fox or woman beyond  
the trees  
washed downstream  
given away to the world  
or finitude

woke to the near  
volatile invisible dark  
that creates annihilates  
to dying to birthing  
to currencies or  
weights or measures or forces

woke listening to the trees  
a sound drawn back and forth  
galaxy or quasar or anti quasar  
electron or positron  
sun or a giant red star  
supernova or grandmother  
woke to a siren or nothing

a second life  
across deep red chestnut timber  
that takes emptiness  
to climb up some string  
crossing the lines over and back  
to a breath  
reaching for word after word after word

woke under the veil  
at the bottom of the falls  
like the stones shattered below  
with no idea what or where  
each dark threshold crossed  
with speed  
into dream and free

woke to giving or being torn from or  
clouds or drifting or breaking or tumbling

or why  
for air for water for earth for fire  
not dwelling  
but moving  
is light upon the earth

## immigrant

the new rose I planted  
by the window flings its magenta petals wide

a city rose  
in my forest home sings

I noticed its lonely coast  
when I watered  
wandered deep into its hue  
away from the wild ferns  
and fallen trees

hidden birdsong out of the blue  
and falls

private words like veils  
in the rose language  
yet one can see through them

falling clear upon the stones  
near the stem with its thorns

wheels and horns

silvers more than I can reach  
in a history of flames  
and petals that turn to wings

## I said I

but I meant  
the lonely road where I walk  
in the forest

not lost but passing through  
boundaries

I meant the stones broken and carried  
by glacier  
that came and left  
cold that receded into the season's  
berries

where we all come  
the place of hidden roots  
where I put my weight

one wild stem of columbine rises  
with its bud  
opens into a tiny lantern made from sunset  
and unborn strawberries

I said I but I meant morning's heavy mist  
rising from the deep lake  
to climb the headlands  
from the direction of the sun  
where hawks fly overhead

I meant the fox who meanders from this side  
to the other  
following the scent  
not hungry but taken into another  
appetite



## landscape

I turn to go  
but am nothing but path  
in the forest  
marked by deer hooves  
back and forth  
unable to hold roots  
rising from the earth  
as a falling tree drops inch by inch  
into thickets and gloom  
and mushrooms  
beneath and through  
balsam aspen spruce  
beetles and fungi  
fed by fire and rain  
needles fallen on the feet  
of Norway  
on the bank of the river  
on the bedrock with streams  
I lift my arm  
but it has turned to limb  
branch twig leaf  
raise my voice  
but it has turned to breath  
my words flutter  
in the crowns of trees  
I call to you like wind

## Acknowledgments

## Afterword

*Cloud Birds'* poems explore migrations in its flight through the western shore of Lake Superior and the Iron Range of Minnesota. It contains twenty-one love poems to bears, and it is a woman's narrative of love and fear.

Sheila Packa, author of *The Mother Tongue* and *Echo & Lighting*, is the poet laureate of Duluth, 2010–2012. The granddaughter of Finnish immigrants, she grew up on Minnesota's Iron Range.

She does spoken word poetry performance with cellist Kathy McTavish and has published poetry, short stories and essays in many literary magazines. Her poems have been in several anthologies, including *Good Poems American Places* (Viking Penguin, 2011) *Finnish-North American Literature in English* (Mellen Press, 2009) *Beloved of the Earth: 150 Poems of Grief and Gratitude* (Holy Cow Press, 2008) and *To Sing Along the Way: Minnesota Women Poets from Pre-Territorial Days to the Present* (New Rivers Press, 2006).

Some poems are available as mp3 downloads on her website. Her book of poems, *The Mother Tongue*, published by Calyx Press Duluth in 2007, received a NEMBA honorable mention. She received a Loft Mentor Award in poetry (1995), two Arrowhead Regional Arts Council fellowships for poetry, an ARAC Career Opportunity grant, and two Loft McKnight Awards, (poetry 1986 and prose 1996). For more information, go to [www.sheilapacka.com](http://www.sheilapacka.com).