


The background features several watercolor-style floral illustrations. In the top left, there are pinkish-red petals. In the top right, there are yellow petals. On the left side, there are vertical red and pink petals. On the right side, there are pink petals. At the bottom left, there is a blue flower with a yellow center. At the bottom right, there is a yellow flower with a dark center.

Wales Haiku Journal

Spring '26


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 - Spring Stirs
 - Spring Sun
 - Rengay.
 - Tan Renga
 - Spring Surges
 - Haibun
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Editors' Note

This Spring, we were honoured to read work from over 500 poets, spanning more than 4,000 poems. From these, a carefully considered selection has found its place.

This edition brings together poets from across the world, with work that moves between landscapes, seasons, and sensibilities. Our aim is that it shares a common attentiveness to the fleeting, and the finely seen.






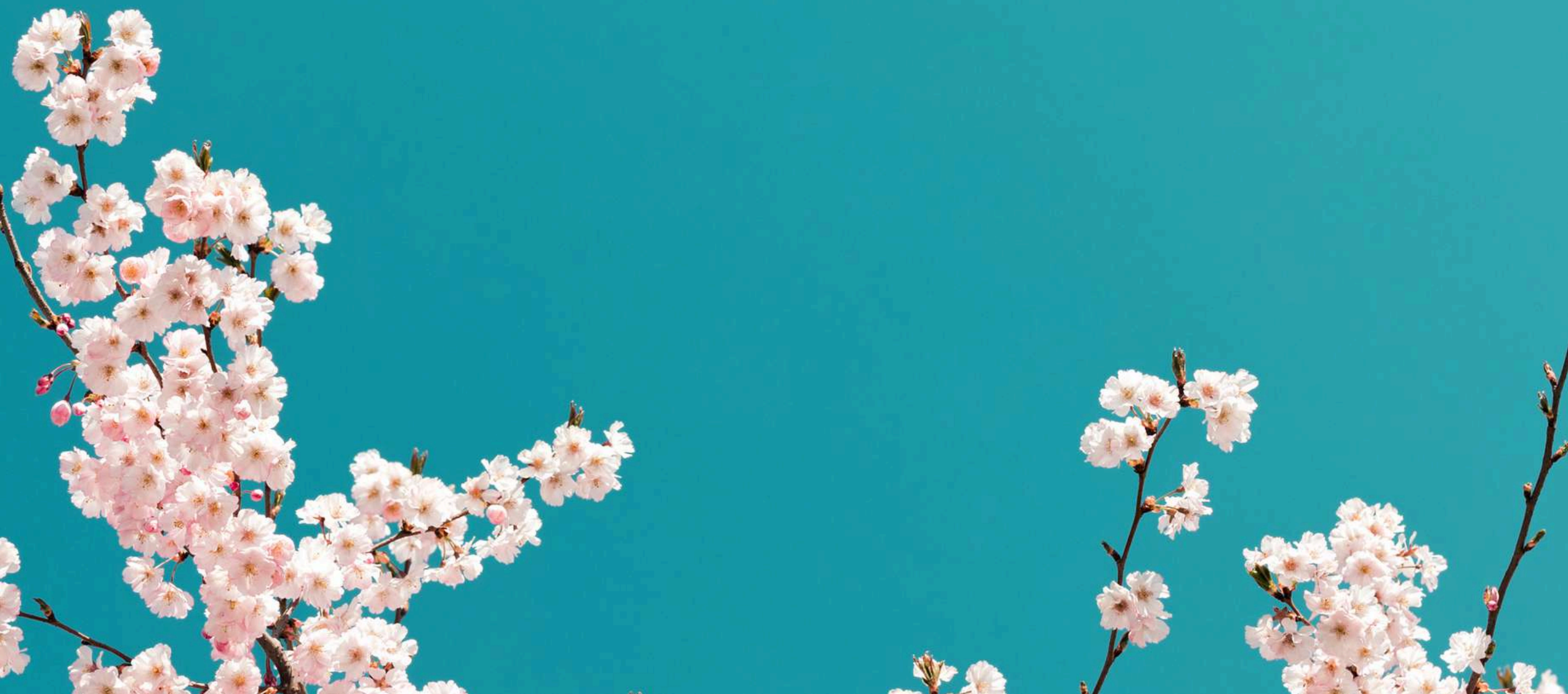
Across the edition, the haiku trace the arc of the season from early to late spring, accompanied by a small selection of longer and collaborative forms, including tan-renga, rengay, haibun, and haiga. Together, we hope to offer a varied and textured reading experience, while remaining rooted in the clarity and lightness of the haiku spirit.

As always, our thanks go to every poet who trusted us with their work.

Wishing you happy reading,
Joe and Luci



Spring Stirs



new dawn
a ladybird
unfolds its wings

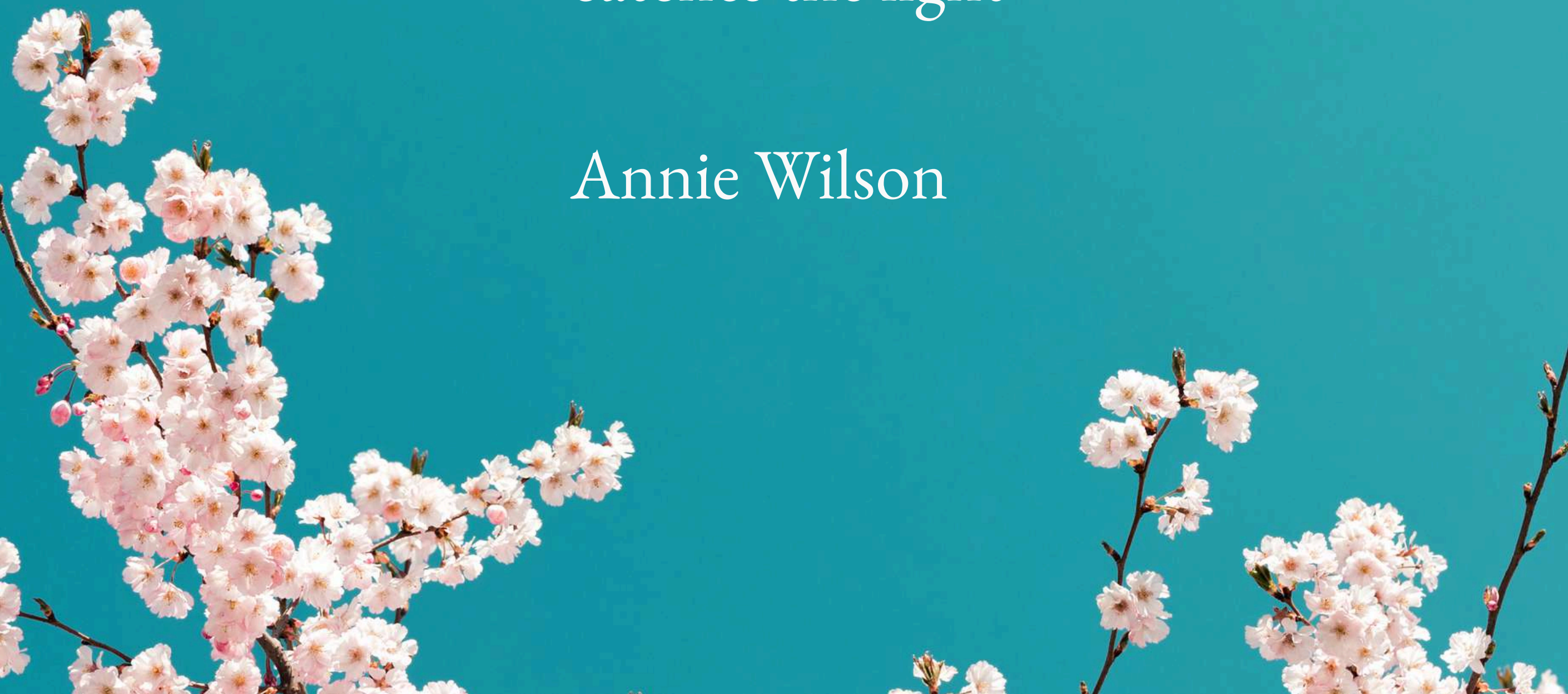
Tony Williams

lily bulb
setting it in the earth
beside the worm

Ruth Holzer

sunrise
a robin's song
catches the light

Annie Wilson



frosted window
open just a fraction
yet the sunrise fits

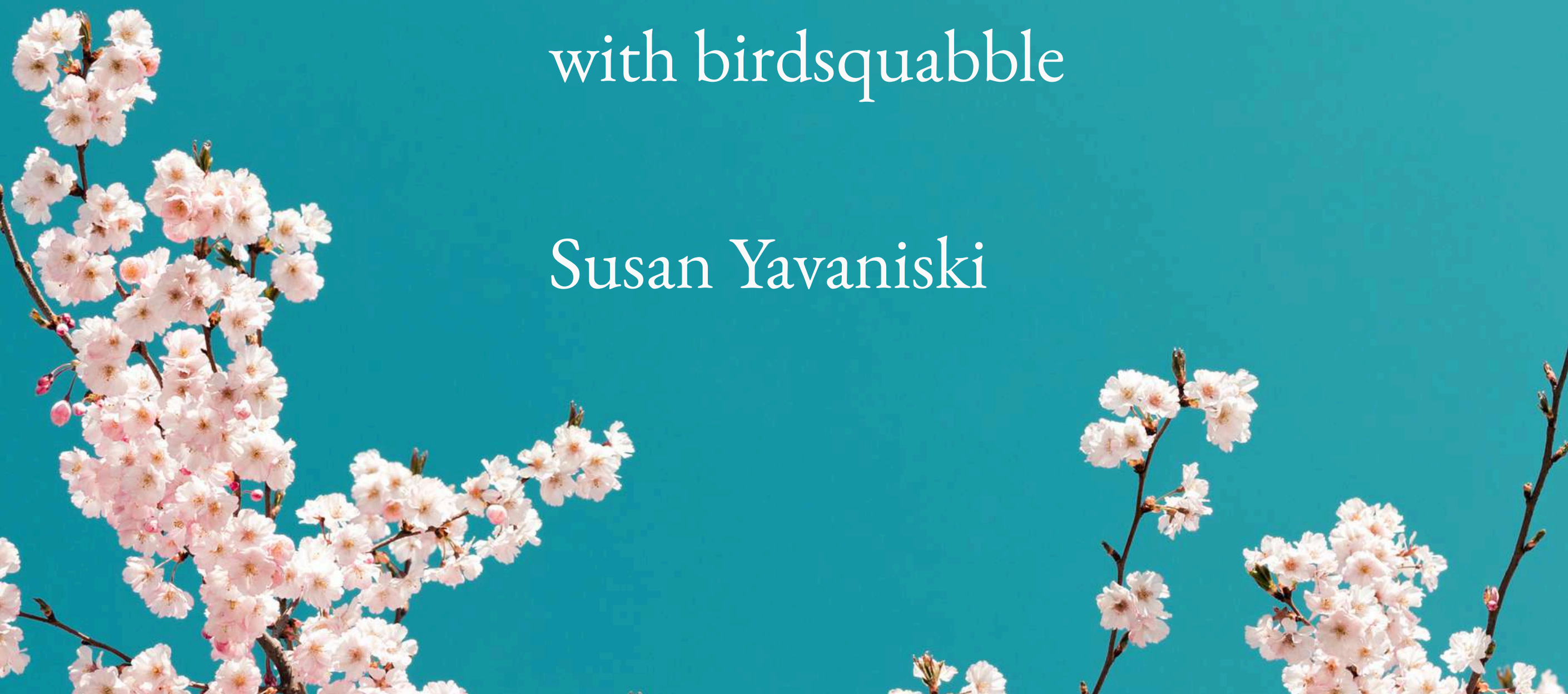
Ben Oliver

blackbird song
daydreaming the blossom
back into spring

Joanna Ashwell

half-free of ice
the river jammed
with birdsquabble

Susan Yavaniski



early spring
ice thorns cling
to snow gums

Marilyn Humbert

blown out river ...
my ghillie slips in
a wad of snuff

Lew Watts

juvenile rooster
a crack in the tone
of dawn's call

Helga Jermy



the curve
in a rainbow
snowdrops

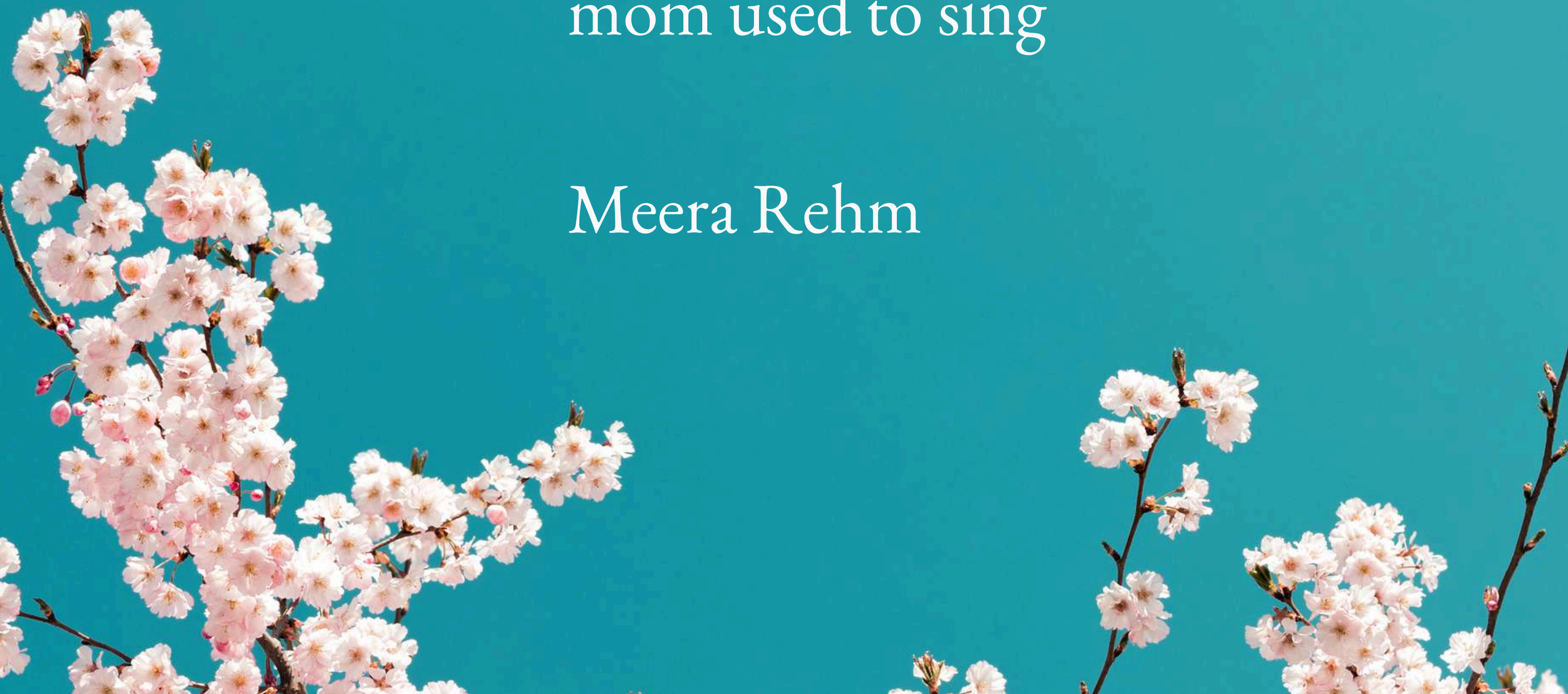
Gareth Nurdén

snow slush—
soaked
socks

Paul Millan

spring planting
I hum the song
mom used to sing

Meera Rehm



a week into spring
the empty lot red
with poppies

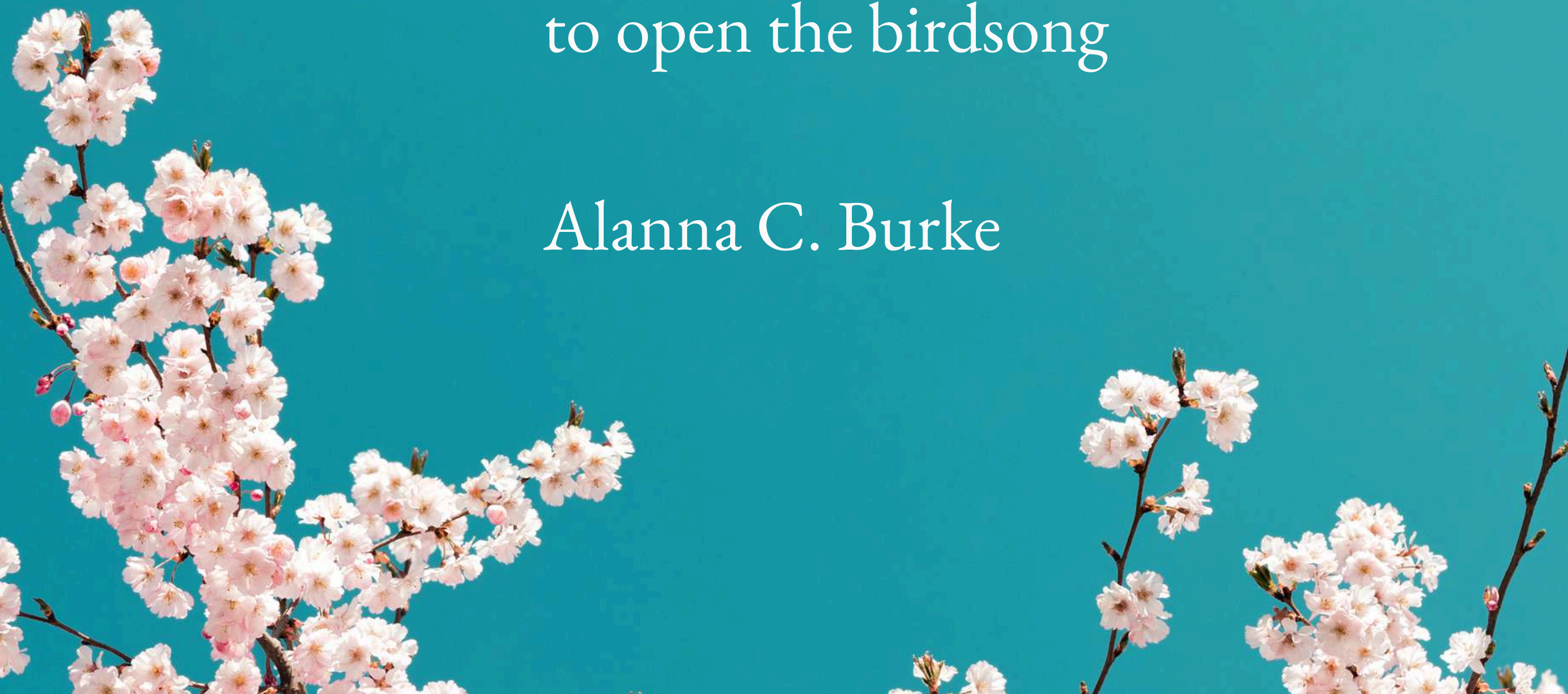
Vandana Parashar

late frost
frozen as if in question
an earthworm

David Gale

first warm day
I unlatch a window
to open the birdsong

Alanna C. Burke



a sparrow
hopping backward
more and more daylight

Shawn Blair

rainbow swan my son as himself

Robyn Cairns

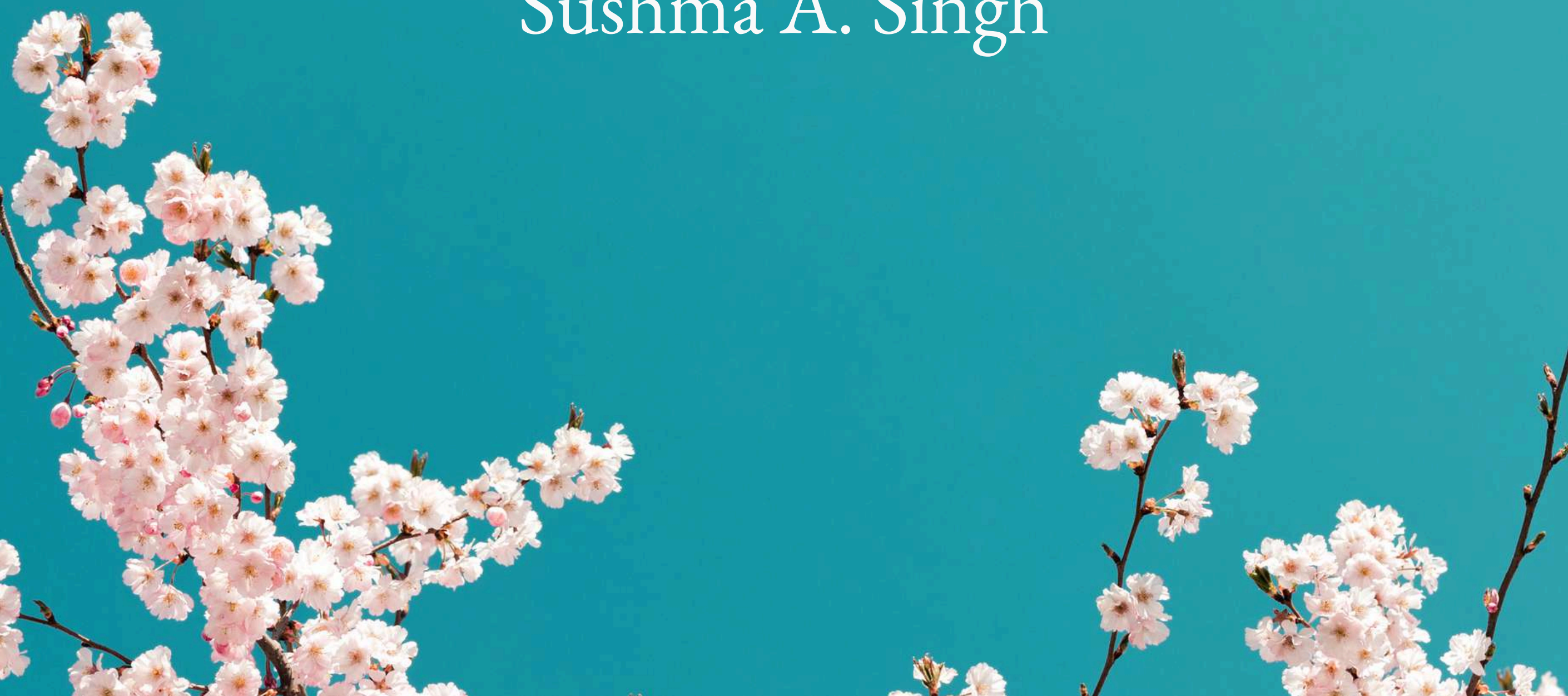
wet sidewalk—
she sets the earthworm
back in the grass

Wilda Morris





Sushma A. Singh



thawing lake
swan wings unfold
inside me

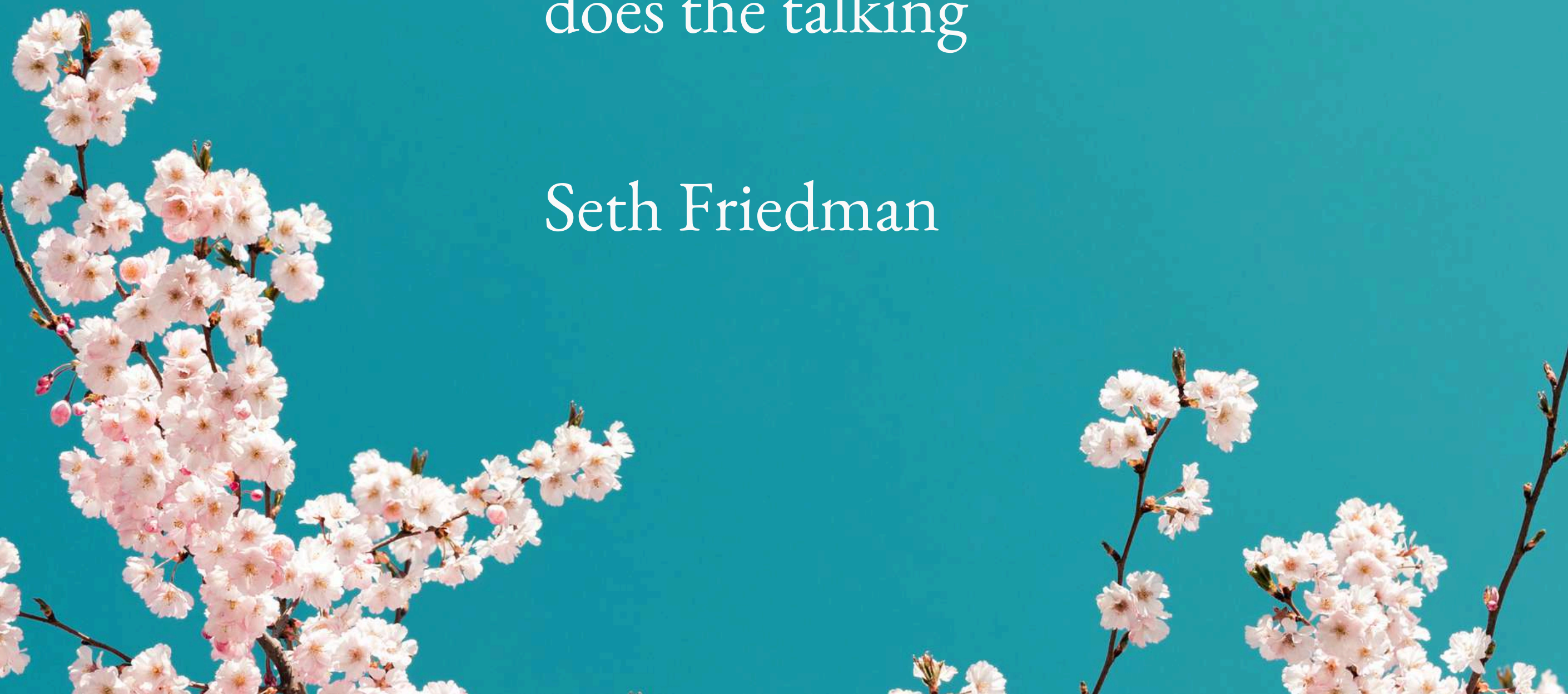
Farah Ali

last frost —
sheep's breath
glazing the gate

Adele Evershed

memorial bench . . .
the river
does the talking

Seth Friedman



flying buttress
another skein of geese
tugs at the sky

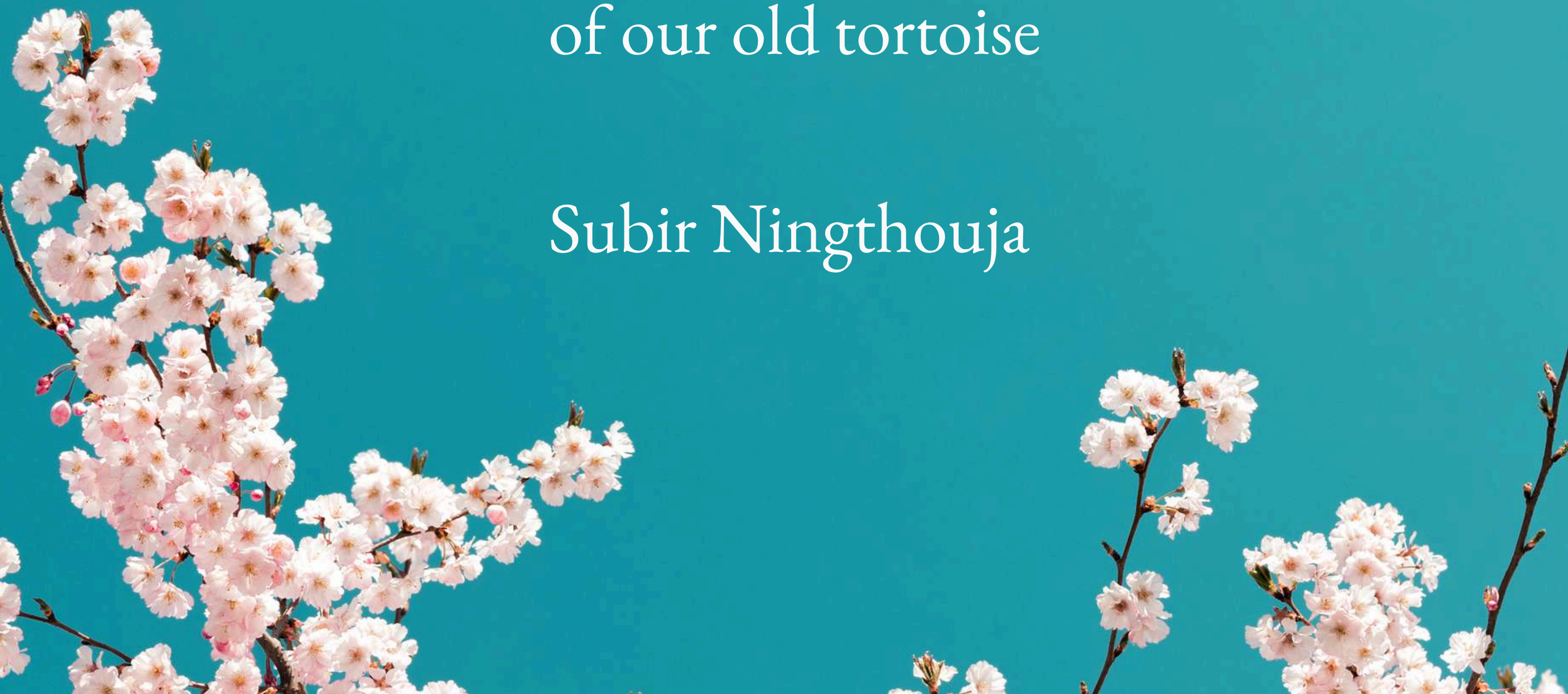
Laurie Greer

broken twigs
what's left to say
about winter

Jamie Wimberly

spring thaw
the slow awakening
of our old tortoise

Subir Ningthouja



spring drizzle
seven wet chickens
under a banana leaf

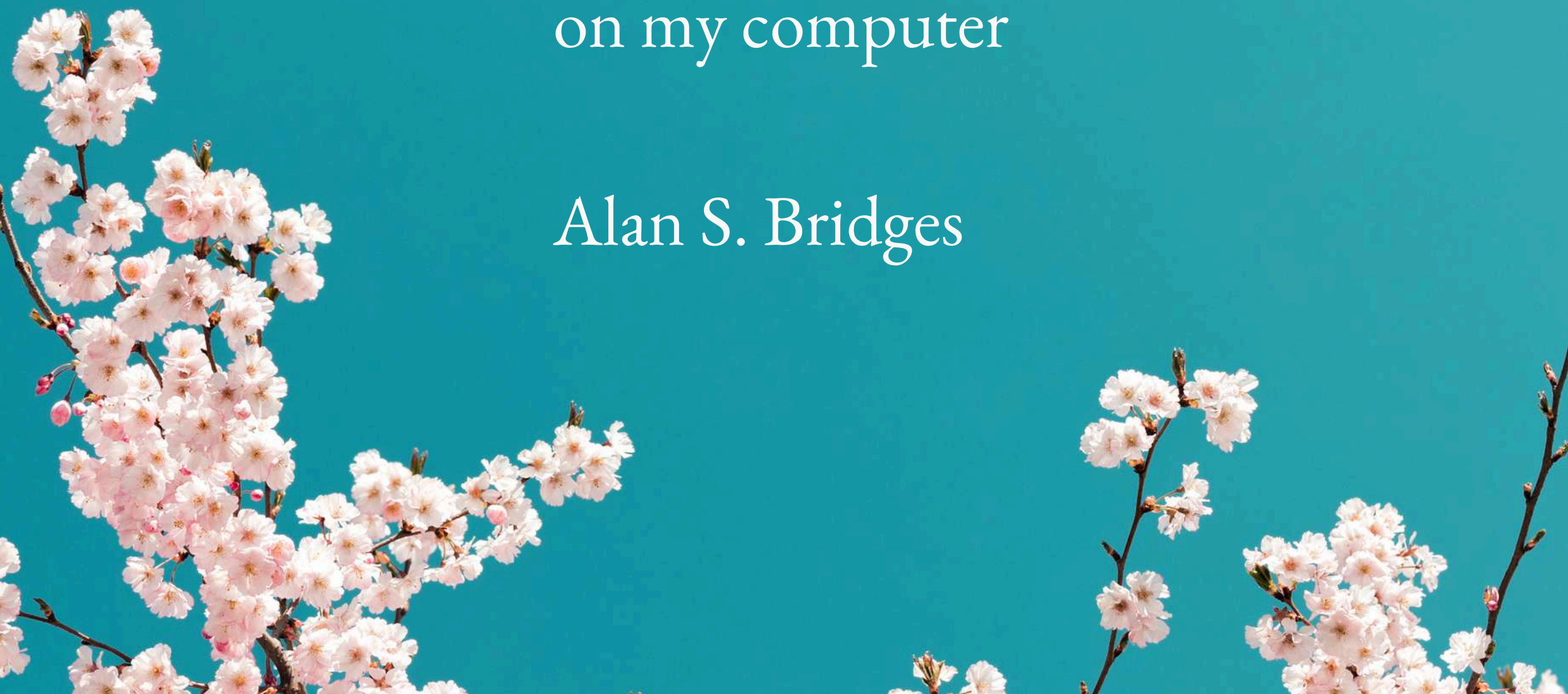
Michael J. Galko

yellow sky
the eddying
of starlings

Timothy Daly

a cold draft
from an open window
on my computer

Alan S. Bridges



jasmine tendrils
the not yet
of now

Kathabela Wilson

fine kapljice —
djed njeguje oblik
mladog trsa

fine mist —
grandfather tends the shape
of a young vine

Danijela Grbelja



surprise visit
from the intercom
the song of a bird

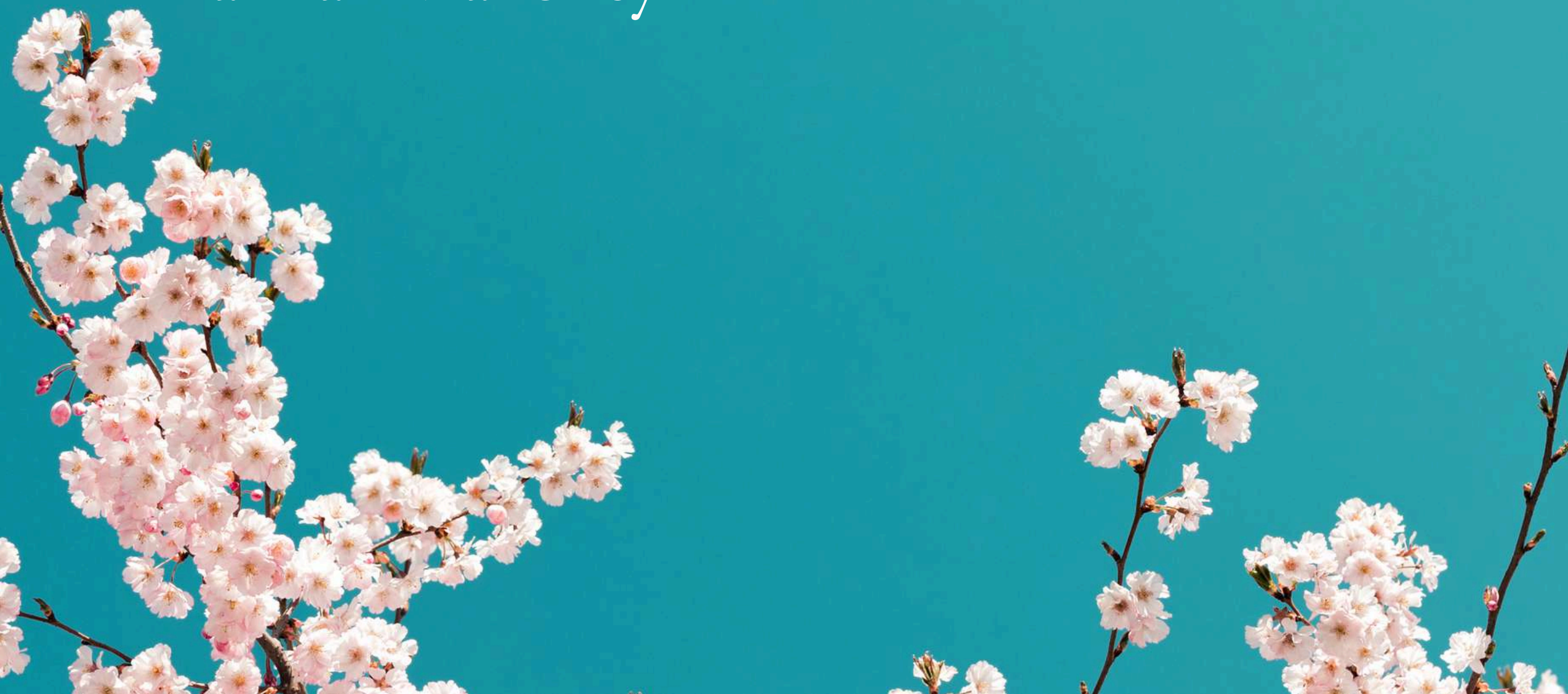
Eleonore Nickolay

a bluebird nesting at the edge of the page a doodle

Mary McCormack

last ice
an early bee hovers
in a skunk cabbage hood

Hannah Mahoney



tea ceremony
gran's heirloom cups
gather the sun

Mona Bedi

the grimy coat
a tramp slipped off—
snowmelt

Laurie Greer

the squelch
of sphagnum moss
spring rain

Farah Ali



flute music
softly bending
irises in the rain

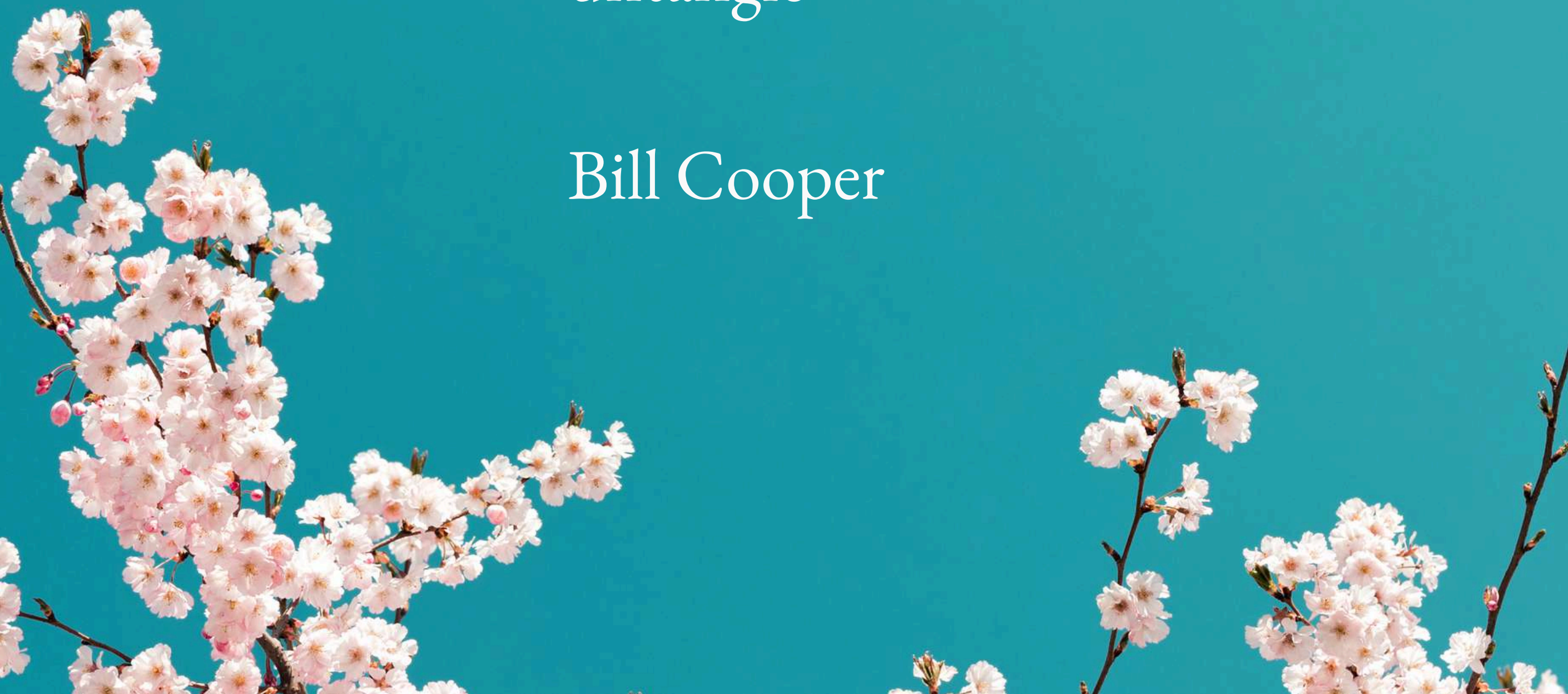
Kari Davidson

spring puddle —
grazing in the clouds
the tethered cow

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

onrush of wavelets
arms of a baby sea star
untangle

Bill Cooper



downpour
sparrows and finches
rebuild

M. R. Pelletier

the beggar
his worn-out hat next to
the first crocuses

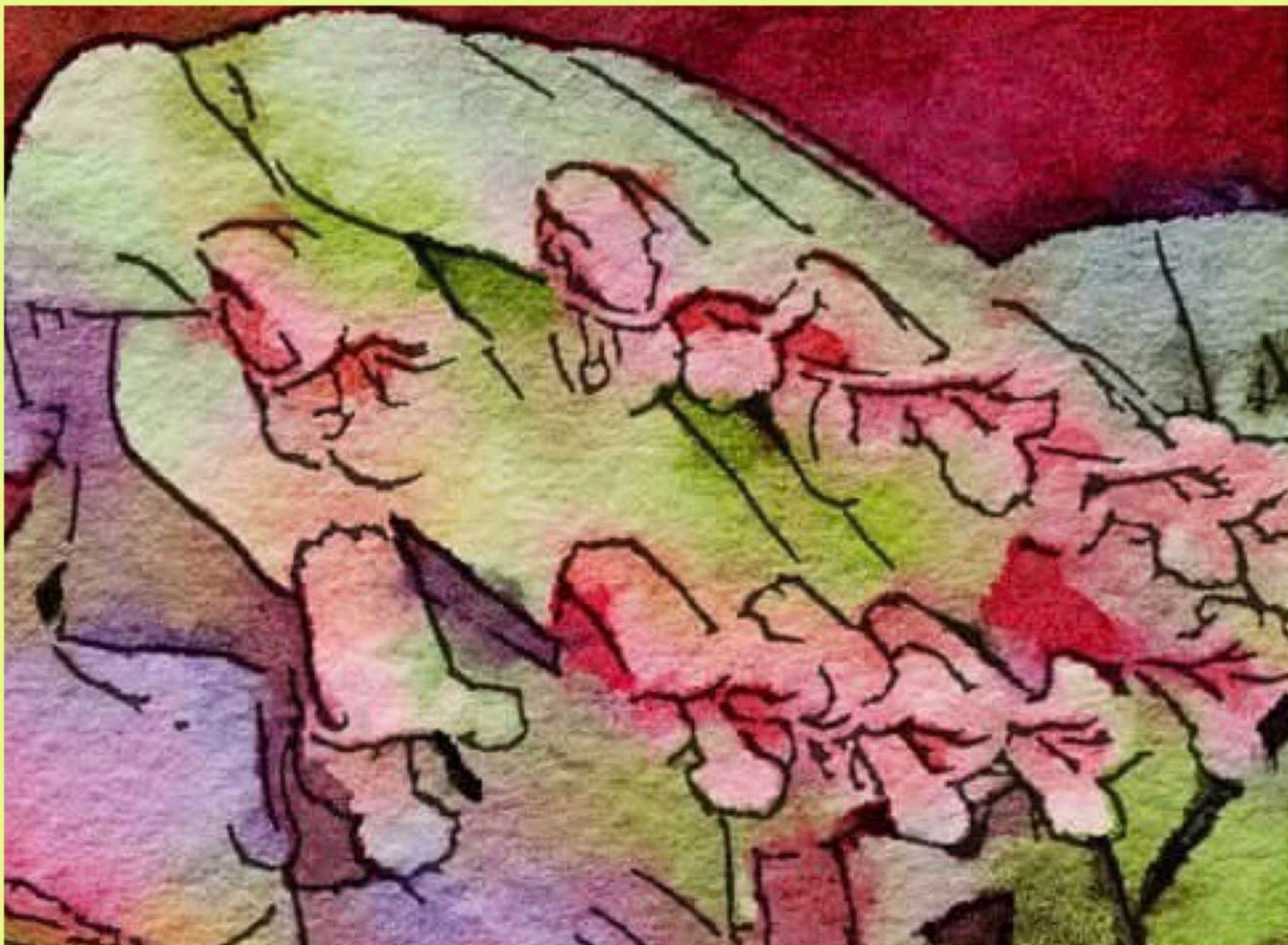
Urszula Marciniak

snowmelt
the quicksilver
of minnows

Millicent Bee



A NOD TO SPRING DAFFODILS



Bonnie J Scherer



spring rain
faint chalk lines
softening

Elliot Diamond

spring thaw—
a waterfall tunes
itself over time

Goran Gatalica

post-operative
breathless gardening
a crocus

Louise Carson



window watching
the different paces
of afternoon clouds

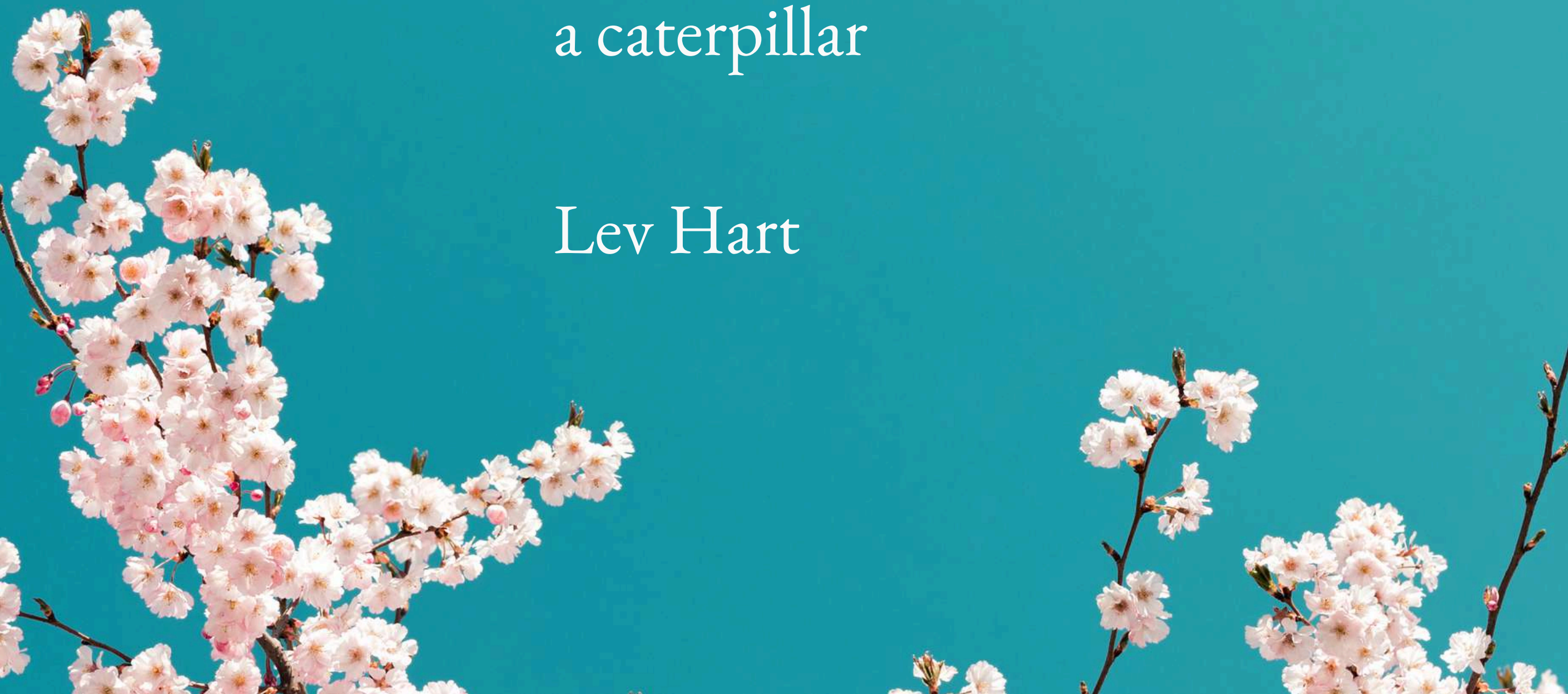
Ben Gaa

early spring forest;
on the snowy path
bits of birch bark

Kasper Salonen

job interview
on my lapel
a caterpillar

Lev Hart



fresh spring scent
touching the tulips
more carefully

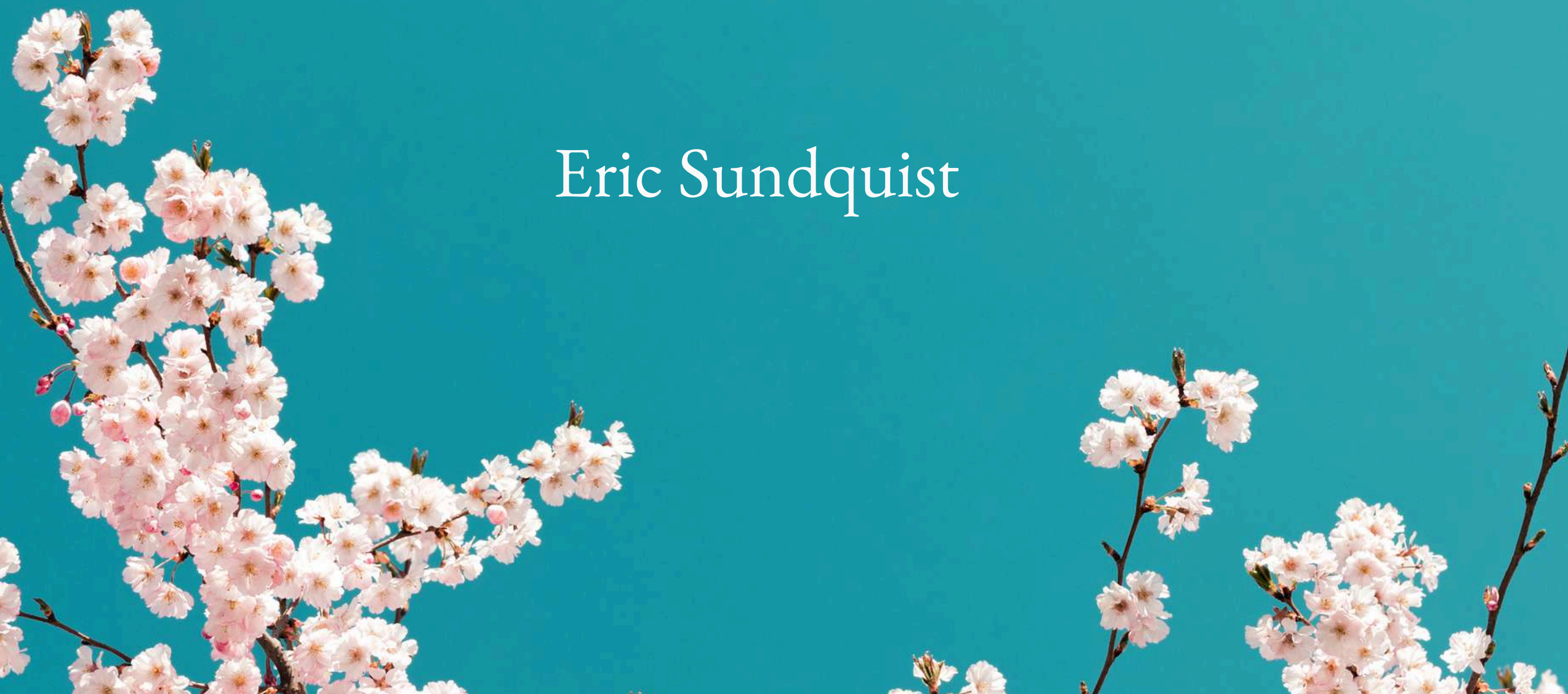
Lucas Weissenborn

a tear
in the sky's fabric
peregrine

Nick T

sunken canoe
a muskrat surfaces
with a wicker creel

Eric Sundquist



snail love
all because today
it rained

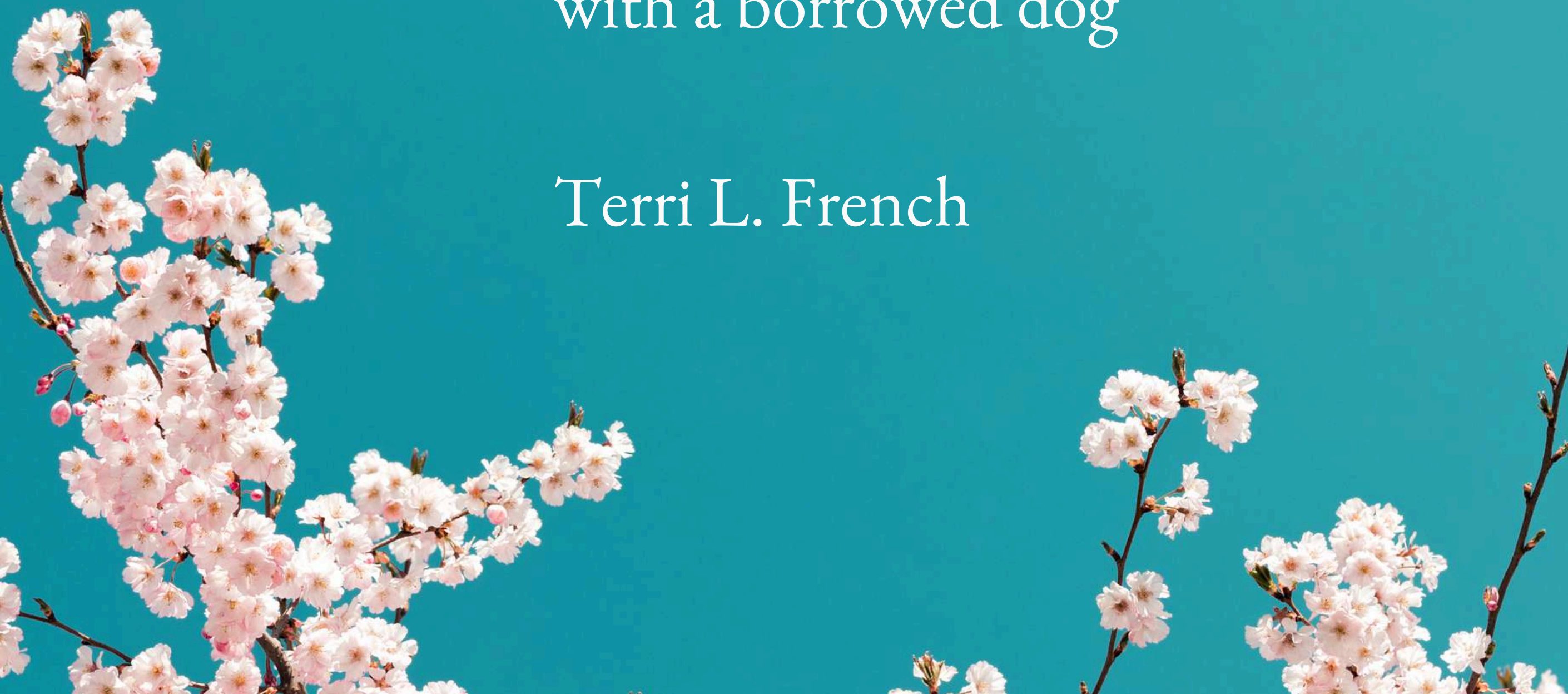
Marie Derley

passing storm
the major chord
of a double rainbow

Alanna C. Burke

early Spring
sharing my walk
with a borrowed dog

Terri L. French



storm surge
a nest of fledglings
floats away

Stephanie Zepherelli

march warmth
I change siri's
accent to irish

John Pappas

wind rush the pillion rider's white knuckles

Robert Kingston



blossom wind
through a chain-linked fence
the meadowlark's song

Jacob D. Salzer

first snowfall –
from so much longing for mother
premature whitening

Mihaela Babusanu

island granite
a glimpse of eggs
as the gulls swap places

Kristen Lindquist



fossil hunter
dragonflies sunning
on the erratic

Debbie Strange

fog-wet lichen
an owl calls from within
the hollow tree

Kristen Lindquist

a sudden sunbeam
along the riverbank
dusk-lit daffodils

Dyana Basist





Jenny Fraser



spring rain
mud on the hem
of her dress

Jacek Margolak

row upon row
of grey terraced houses
one-blackbird sunset

Keith Evetts

gibbous moon . . .
the bulging doorway
of a rural bus

Kala Ramesh



spotting saturn—
a foreigner tells me
how exotic i sound

Anthony Lusardi

harmattan moonlight
seeping through
old curtains

Uchechukwu Onyedikam

turn of the stars
the night nurse
introduces herself

Susan Yavaniski



Spring Sun



the cadence of rain on the rooftop sleepsong

Deborah Burke Henderson

morning fog only the voice of a tanager

Kristen Lindquist

before sunrise

camel bells cresting

the dunes

sanjuktaa asopa



woodland spring -
I sink my hands
into the treetops

Hynek Koziol

morning stillness
a pine needle lands
straight up

Laurie D. Morrissey

woodpecker drumroll
the morning sun
breaks the hill crest

Ben Oliver



the only one
out this morning
a vireo's aria

Brad Bennett

morning sparrows
answer the radiator
Shavasana

Jed Munson

waking
to snorting horses
Spring fog

Archie G. Carlos



march sunshine:
a turtle
reclaims its log

Charles Harper

emigration
in her bundle flower seeds
from her homeland

Urszula Marciniak

wild hares
in the garden
one tulip left

• Tré



hospice garden
taking our vows
at dad's window

Barrie Levine

treading lightly
on a pollen carpet
bees in the thyme

Marietta McGregor

in an
upside-down world
nuthatch

Sarah Paris



midday
a toad hides
in the rock garden

Stephen C. Curro

hill rain
among magnolias
first titmouse call

Keiko Izawa

handful of orange peels
remembering how
the world was made

• Zach Street



cloud shadow
the skylark comes down
from another song

Thomas Powell

first to arrive
last to leave
creeping phlox

C. Jean Downer

silvering
the leaf's spine
the path the rain takes

Kathryn Liebowitz



the itch
to garden
stinging nettles

Bonnie J Scherer

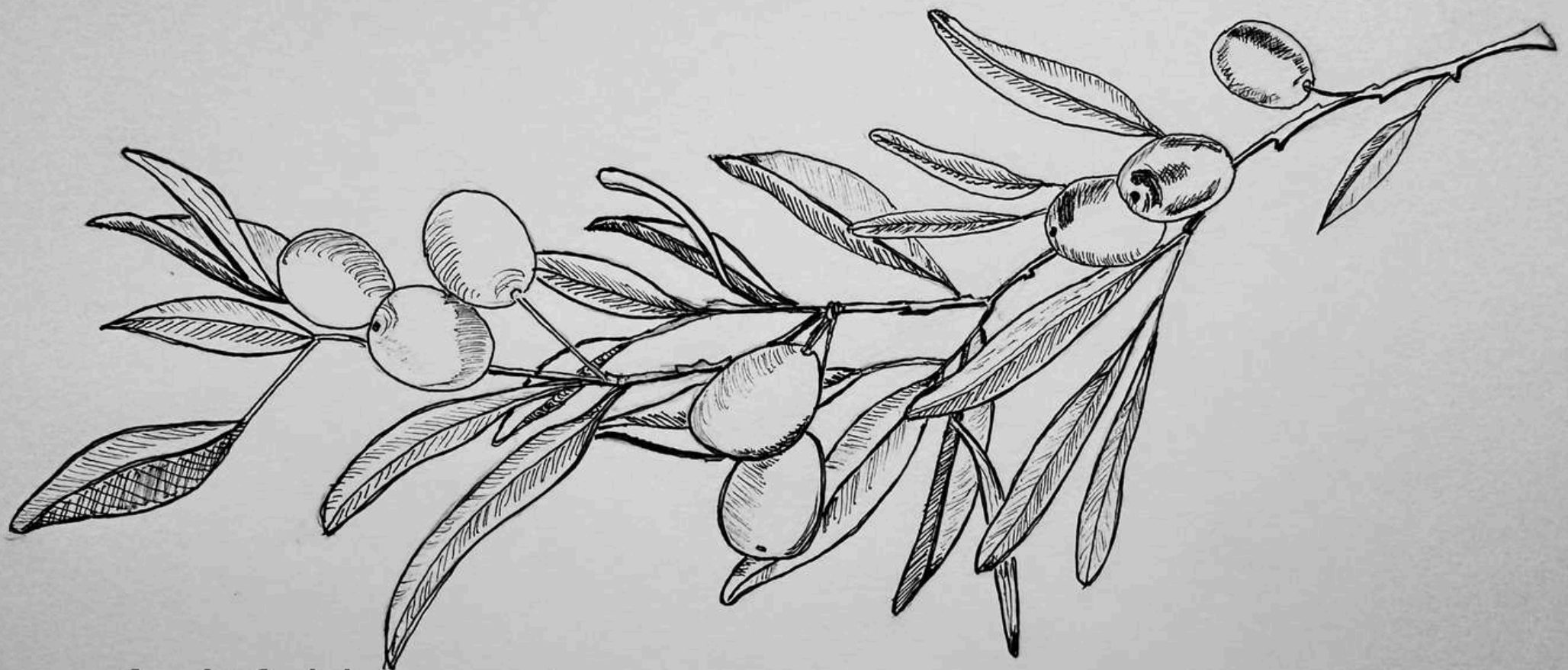
spring breeze
a paper boat carries
a cherry blossom

Alvin B. Cruz

poplars -
the color of the wind
along the road

● Angiola Inglese





fruitful harvest
tapenade on toast
breaks tension

Aaron Bowker



making peace
with his fall
lichened birch

Julie Schwerin

scattering
the seeds
the sparrows

Bryan Rickert

valley fog banking on my maybes

P. H. Fischer



spring cleaning—
faded in the chest pocket
a friend's obituary

Hifsa Ashraf

coloring the morning breeze cherry blossom rain

Chen-ou Liu

dark entryway
a scent of pink daphne
drifts through my door

Ellie Marie Johnson



the robin's song swishing through each chapter

Mark Gilbert

morning quiet
muffled by moss
forest rain

Goran Gatalica

grosbeak waits
monarch butterfly emerges
from the chrysalis

Rob McKinnon



after the windstorm
the butterfly
pinned to the cork

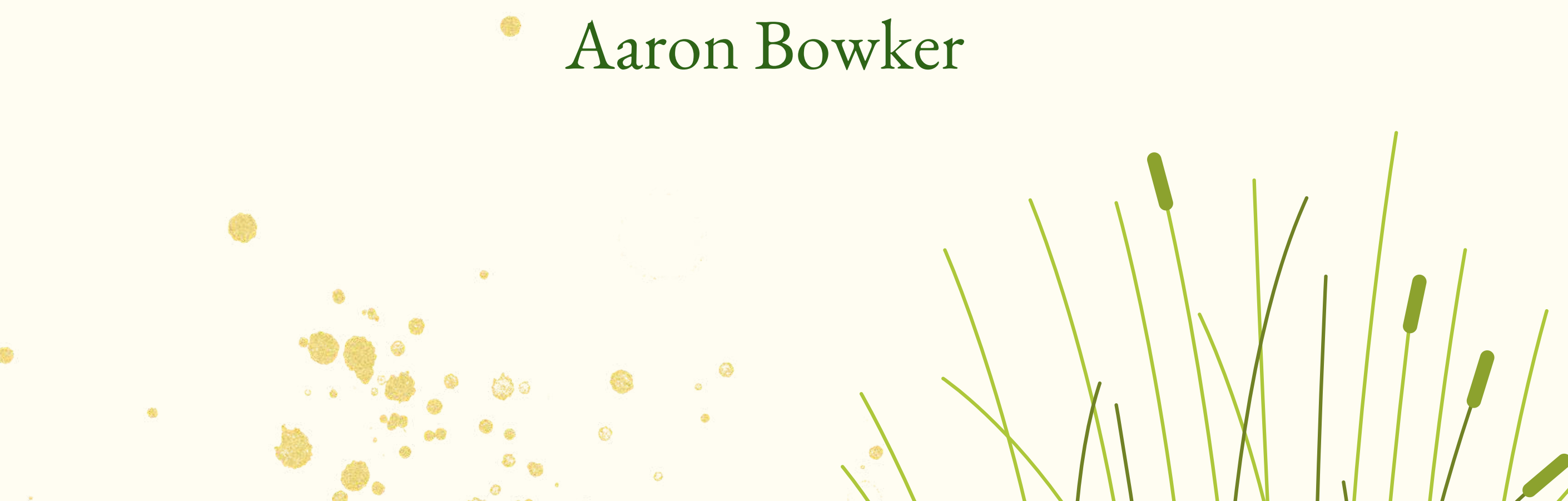
Dave Reynolds

cottongrass seeds—
wind rising
as they fall

Mark Forrester

bare spring trees
on the old oak
a flock of swallows

• Aaron Bowker



mountain mist
on the trail ahead
you walk away

Jonathan English

equinox...
an anchor rises
from the silt

Farah Ali

clouded sky
a hole opens up
for the crow

Laurie D. Morrissey



eroded names
gum blossom gathers
in headstone shadows

Gavin Austin

spring rain
the young couple's quarrel ends
in tears

Bipasha Majumder

big night
our woods fill
with peeper talk

Sarah M. Strong



lost keys...
the frantic legs
of an upside down beetle

Suzanne Leaf-Brock

ephemeral streams
sometimes we all need
a little rain

Pepe Madera

shortcut through back yards
the youngster stops
to right a flower pot

Suzanne Leaf-Brock



hospice silence
a place I cannot reach
in Father's eyes

Chen-ou Liu

stream rocks
too far apart
for dry feet

Michael J. Gallo

spring sunshine
measured by a girl
in a cartwheel

• Ralph Stott



traffic jam
early worker bees
collecting dust

Lori Kiefer

morning fog—
the clay in my hands
begins to form

Michael Dylan Welch

distant thunder
the waning yellow
of daylilies

Bob Stewart



fitted sheet of rain

Michael J. Galko

a tiny grave
raindrops pearling
on the grass

Arvinder Kaur

a sheep bell
moves the whiteness...
hill fog

Lucas Weissenborn



rocket launch
the deepening trench
of an olive snail

Bill Cooper

bee wings
the delicateness
of a crush

Mary McCormack

no one
outside in March wind
swinging feeders

Wakako Miya Rollinger



a fresh molehill
the medication taking
its time...

David Gale

middle stumped the shape of the sun's rays

Robert Kingston

a wet evening
the busker plays
“Walk on by”

Erica Ison



bare poplar
a clear view
of our empty nest

Ian Willey

the hollows
in a goodbye hug
oak bark

Agnes Eva Savich

dusk deepens
from the house on the hill
piano

Adrian Bouter



sea fret...
gulls fall silent
midair

Farah Ali

a gray fox finds
the center of the universe
artesian spring

Joshua St. Claire

city gulls circling the square

John Hawkhead



standing water...
horse under a canvas rug
hoof-deep in cloud

Rodney Williams

shivering as well snowdrops

Joshua St. Claire

dusk
a fencepost shadow
lengthening

Elliot Diamond



roadside stop
gold sunset light
on stiffening fur

Earl Livings

receding sandbar
one pelican flies off
then the rest

Bill Cooper

tinnitus
the marsh gathers
small frogs

• Jeff Hoagland



gardenia buds—
moth wings
stir the air

Tom Bierovic

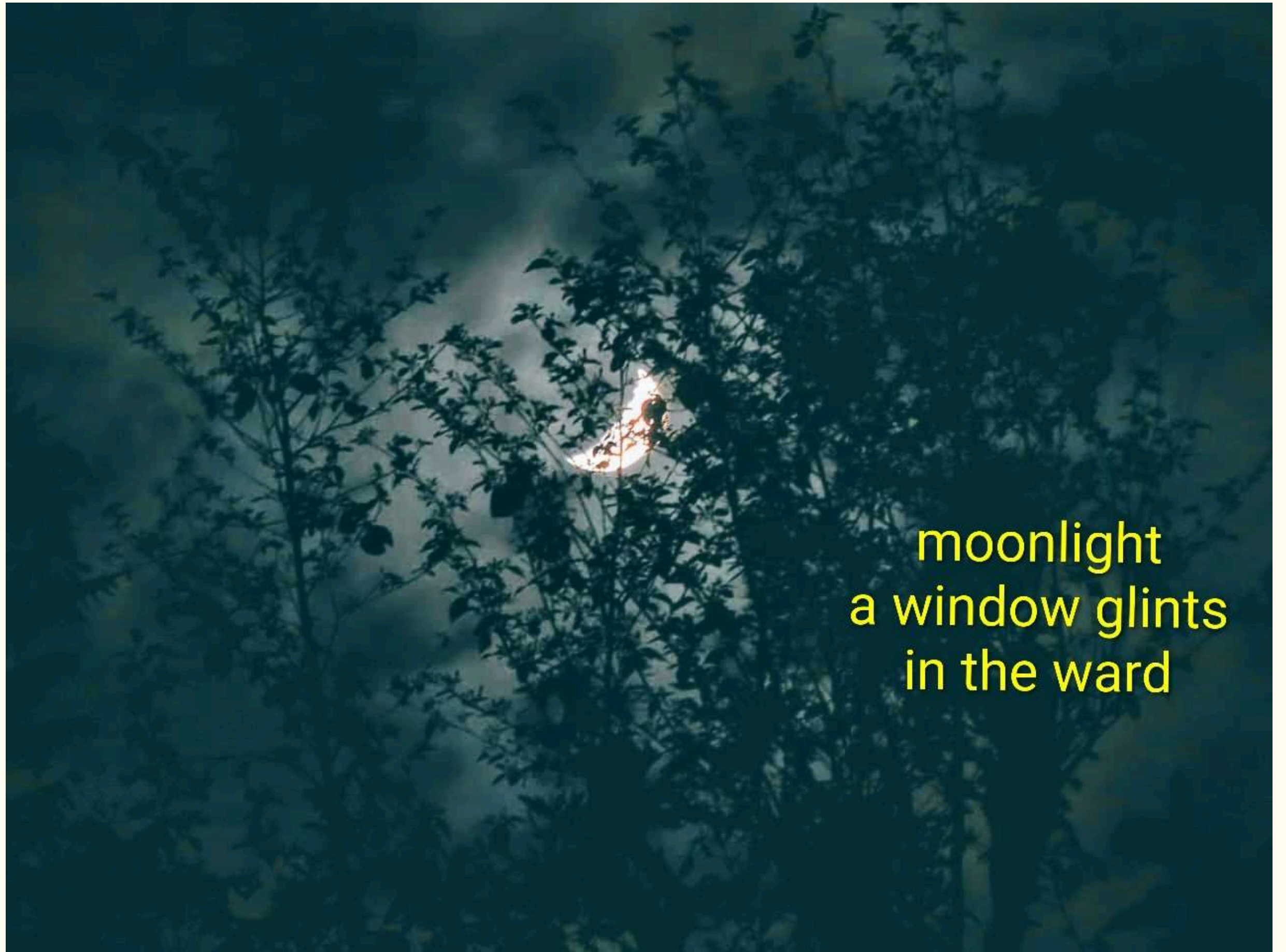
tucking mom into bed--
the frailty of
butterfly wings

Kim Klugh

depressed
after the graveyard shift . . .
night slugs

• Anthony Lusardi





moonlight
a window glints
in the ward

Sushma A. Singh



insomnia the wall in the mirror on the wall

Biswajit Mishra

all-night bodega
Lost Cat flyer fading
in the window

E.C. Traganas

pawning
his purple heart
hunger moon

Archie G. Carlos



mountain evening
the last sunlight
touches the pine

Manasa Reddy Chichili

moonlit beach
a sea turtle lifts itself
from the sea

Kevin Valentine

cold moon ...
a stray dog circles
an unlit fire pit

● sanjuktaa asopa



rain all night
a salamander slips
into its vernal pool

Hannah Mahoney






Tan-Renga

rainless clouds
the slowing flow
of his cursive

hospice lounge
we divide her pills

Lorraine A Padden and Billie Dee






Rengay


Aftermath

charred boulders
at the mountain top
where once there were trees *Jerry Ball*

high water line
marked on city hall *Michael Dylan Welch*

blown-off roof
the little girl in braids
lifted out *James Rodriguez*





after the quake
sorting pink heart pills
from the glass shards


Billie Dee

bromeliads blooming
by hardened lava

Genie Nakano

Siberian photo
a hundred miles
of flattened trees

Deborah P Kolodji



Spring Surges

a woman's broom
sweeps dust from the pavement
brimstone butterfly

Diana Webb

stitching the seam
of a dream —
aurora woodpecker

Kelly Sargent

morning after
discarded stories
line the gutter

Aaron Bowker



Peter Jastermsky

red sky morning
the fisherman's story
reaches the shoreline

Rowan Beckett Minor

a pigeon feather
caught on a daisy
two shades of white

Simon Wilson

spring meadow-
a mare shakes bees
from her mane

Ewan Rourke

stuck in traffic...
a squirrel climbs
down a tree

Stephen C. Curro

lakeside...
on mother's feathered back
a clutch of cygnets

Gwen Bitti

pausing between
watering the roses
a spider

Soumya Mukherjee

coyote scat
loaded with fruit
my neighbor's vineyard

Janet Ruth

roadside stop
a cow's long tongue
through the fence

Perry L Powell

last cast ...
a lone male mallard
becomes a rock

Lew Watts

supply shortage
a beak tucked
under a wing

Lorraine A Padden

sandstone cliff
the gull-chick's down
slick with sea mist

Gavin Austin

gecko and vine—
the two speeds
of climbing

Michael J. Galko

childhood lake —
we scatter the clouds
skipping stones

Mona Bedi

last guest
buzzing in
mosquito

Marilyn Ashbaugh

frost on the ferns—
our brisk walk
in her hometown woods

Michael Dylan Welch

holloway

a sparrowhawk carries its kill

into the holly's depths

Ben Oliver

snake watch

the audacity

of some sticks

Agnes Eva Savich

under the bridge

the can collector empties

last night's rain

Jed Munson

playing leapfrog
on a shingle beach
braided river

Louise Hopewell

noon sickbed
a thrush sings
several airs

Jenny Fraser

arpeggio practice...
the swaying arcs
of my teacher's eyeglass chain

Kari Davidson

schoolyard
a sapling bent
with backpacks

sanjuktaa asopa

Osprey fishing—
he dives from a snag
the river spits him back.

Scott Reid

jazz festival
a warm breeze ruffles
the river

Lorraine Haig

the old swing
under the apple tree
daydreaming

Eavonka Ettinger

cloudless sky
still waiting for her
explanation

Sharon Martina

older women practising
qigong in the park –
my neighbours and I

Maeve O'Sullivan

pine barrens
wind recontours
a sand dune's crest

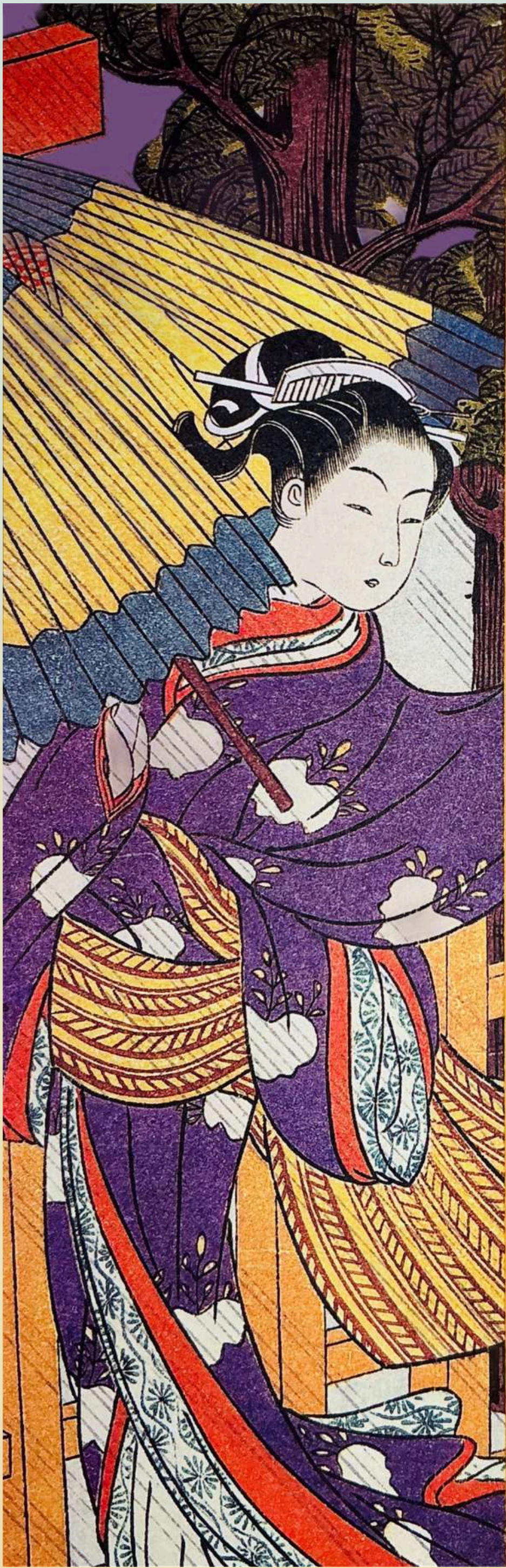
Jay Friedenber

stretched out on a stripe
of the patio chair--
an anole lizard

Kim Klugh

bucket list
a frog poem
of my own

Sumitra Kumar



笑
花
の



*plum blossom wind
the ship that will carry
you home*



Debbie Strange

alopreening
birds of a feather
bond together

Paul Callus

between blossoms
lacking the patience
of the orchid

Alan S. Bridges

the rasp
in a bluejay's call
false spring

Bryan Rickert

old swamp
the sound of frogs
filibustering

Adele Evershed

distant siren—
the sudden splash
of a flying fish

Hifsa Ashraf

always the tracks
never the deer
still this loneliness

Alanna C. Burke

empty refrigerator
a holiday magnet
on the door

Jacek Margolak

a child's laughter
tumbling from the balcony
rangoon creeper

Anju Kishore

dappled light
between the fronds
a lyrebird's song

Jennifer Sutherland

war memorial
distant bugle
of an elk

Gordon Brown

a wuthering wind
out of the blue
Fernweh

Katja Fox

silent class
chirps from the nest
outside

K. Ramesh

empty chair
some of us try filling
the shape of her absence

Helen Sokolsky

hibiscus a hummingbird blurs into the red

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

old olive grove -
my father's voice
lost among the branches

Angela Giordano

every boulder
worth its weight
mountain stone

Zach Street

little taller
than the cattails
a bittern's bill

Eric Sundquist

ice cream
the urge
to lick a cloud

Agnes Eva Savich

falling petals
an old couple's
intertwined fingers

Manoj Sharma

at the give-way...
a sparrowhawk flashes
left to right

Steven Croft

metonymy for the new year open palms

Shloka Shankar

skim light to full fat equinox

Lorraine A Padden

old stone wall . . .

basking in the sun

rat snake

Roberta Beach Jacobson

house sparrows

the stone buddha calls

each by name

John Pappas

homecoming ...
the sound
of mother's toe rings

Kala Ramesh

stable block
the cobblestone path left
in the horse's echo

Robert Kingston

tofu block—
the old man carving
chess pieces

Federico C. Peralta

spring tide
a clam closes
in my hand

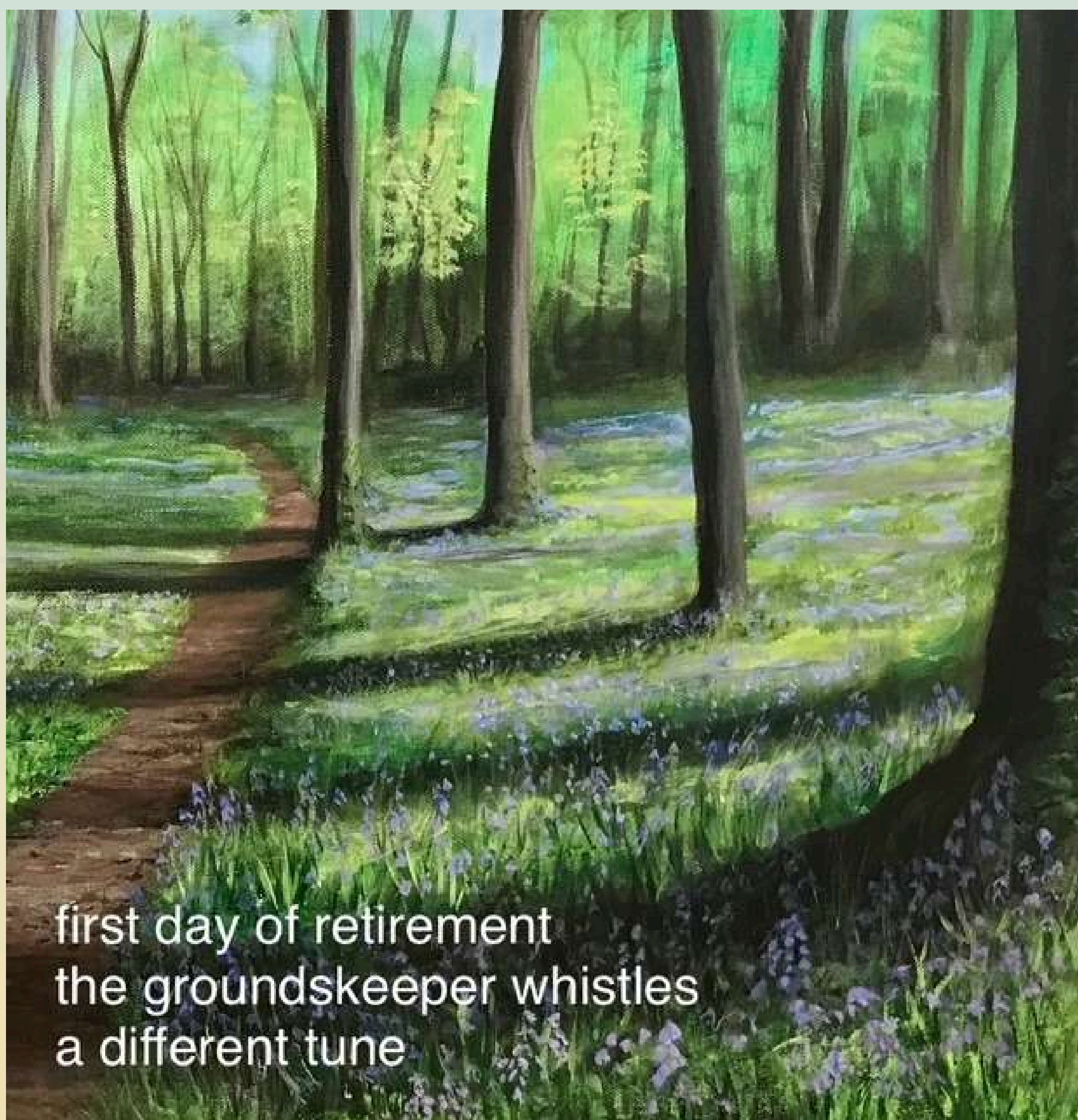
Matt Morden

after the interview
a rook's beak
full of fresh grass

Daniel Sidorowicz

alley apartment
an old woman ululates
for her absent son

Jackie Chou



first day of retirement
the groundskeeper whistles
a different tune

Marion Clarke

cicada shell
his blanket
still on the bed

Martina Matijević

pull of the sea
fishing lures dangle
from her ears

Glenn G. Coats

king tides
reclaim a sandspit
spring equinox

Marietta McGregor

touchless marriage
the handful of reasons
to reach elsewhere

Kelly Sargent

semicolon
rain at the tip
of a palm frond

Bob Stewart

no room
for a spoonbill to land
receding sandbar

Bill Cooper

rolling through borders
the grey armoured progress
of woodlice

John Hawkhead

safari sunset
so gently she hefts
giraffe bones

Carolyn Hall

dusk
at one end of a ploughed field
a tractor idles

Srini

waning moon
in a pale blue sky—
early onset

Suzanne Marshall

lingering daylight—
between temple pillars
a dove's shadow

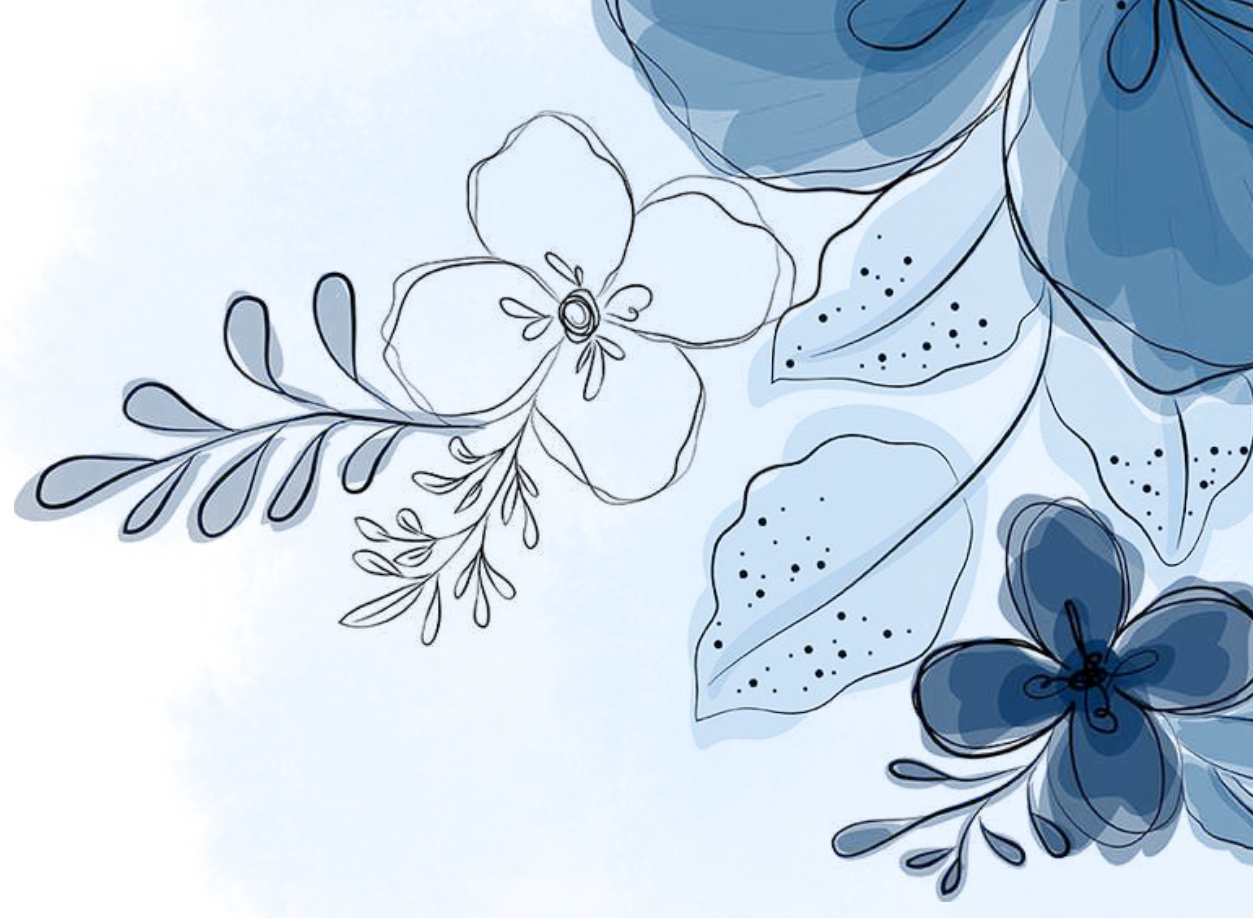
Neena Singh

chipper window
the tang of vinegar
in the starlit cold

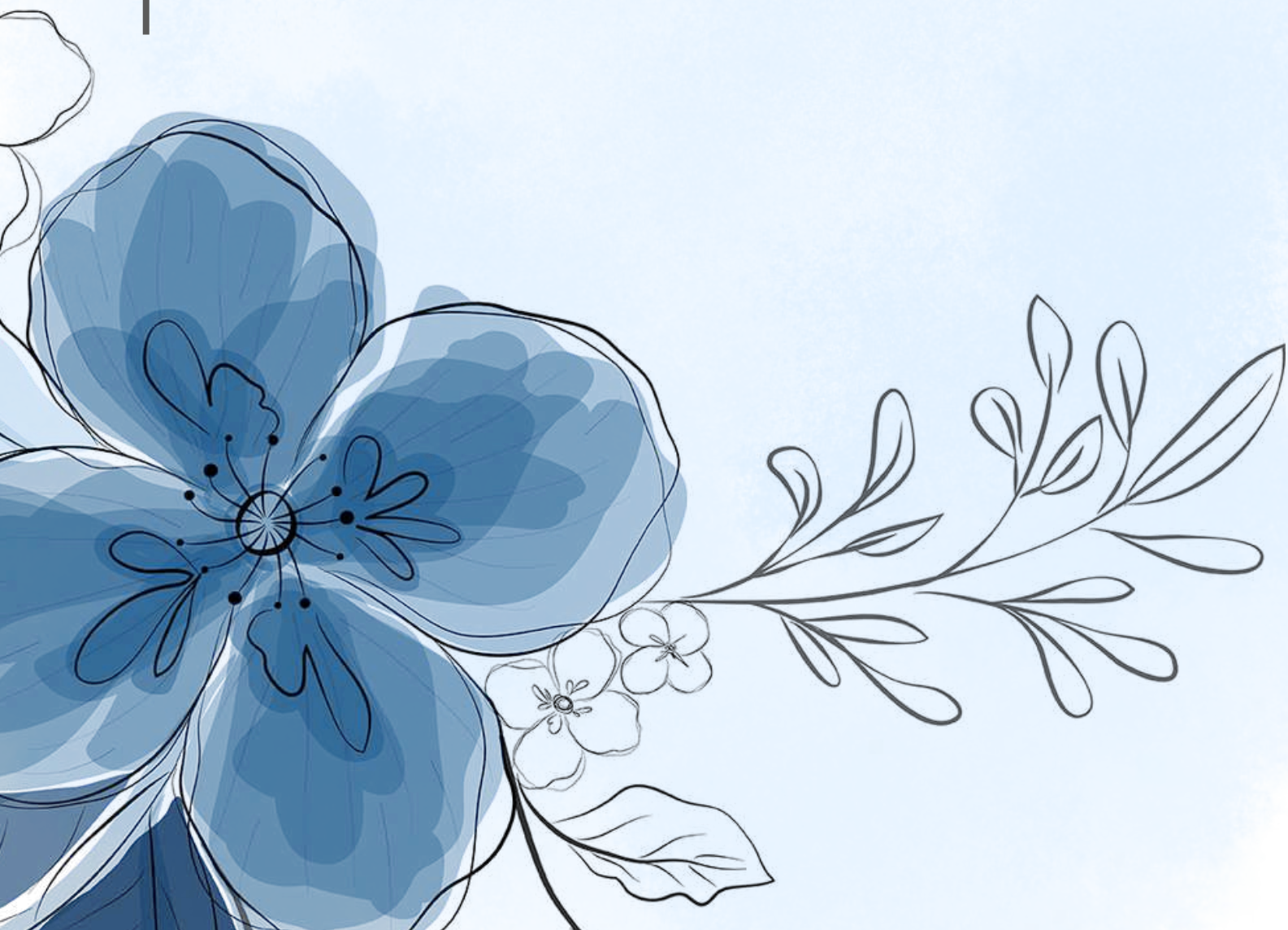
Jeremy Haworth

low tide
in the old tire
a small moon

P. H. Fischer



Haibun



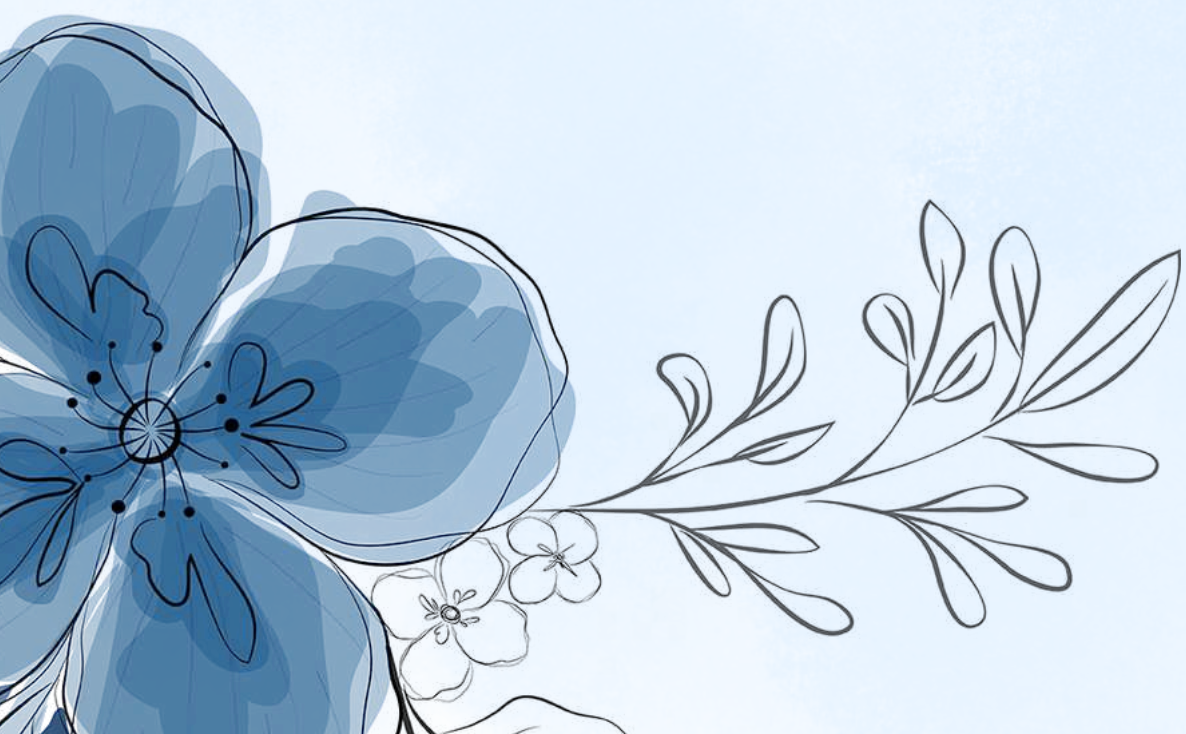


The Griffin, Dale, Pembrokeshire

with apologies to William Carlos Williams

this is just to say ...
the bitter
is warm

There's Gareth pulling pints, all beard and forearms. Two Welsh flags behind, framing this year's trophies—darts, and male-voice-choir. To the side, a chalked lunch menu, each creature daily-fresh, served with chips (laver bread optional). It's September, low tide, and the mackerel have long gone. *Got a lobster back there, two haddock, and Dai*

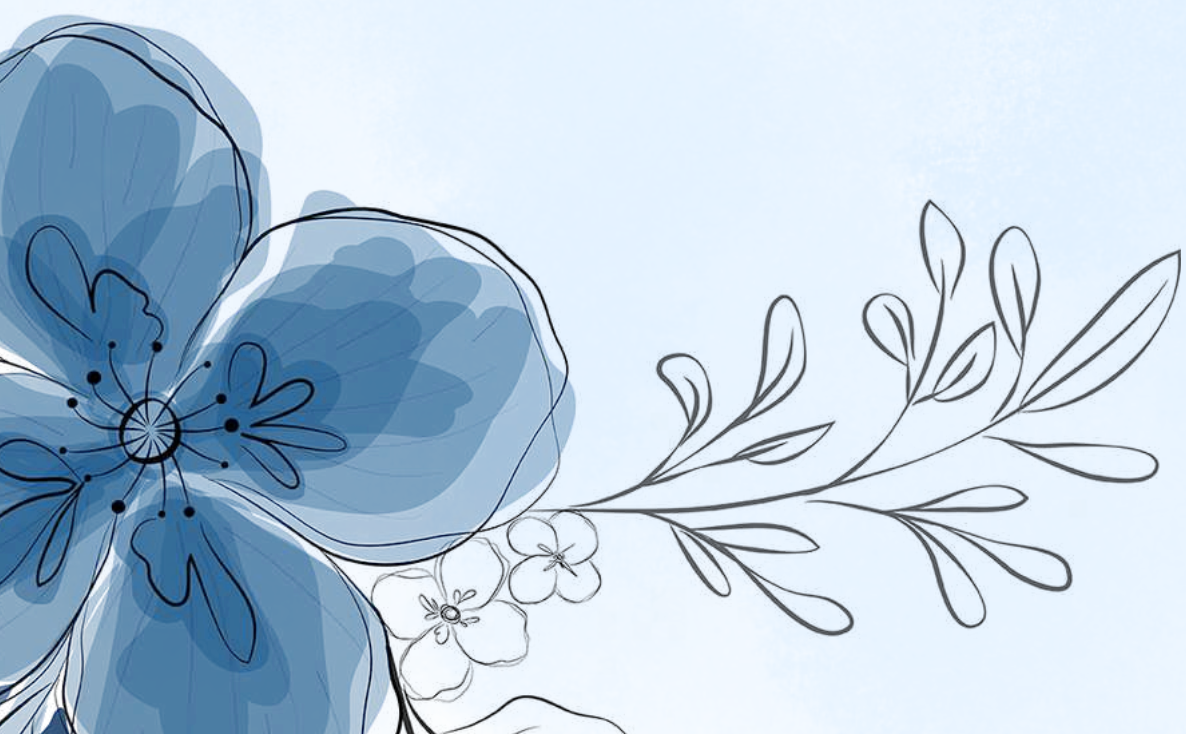




*brought in a John Dory this morning, he says.
Mind you, the cockles are wicked.*

no bar stool
an old tar sways peacefully
on his plantlike stem

Next table, English accent. Two small
springers under the table. Barber jacket,
corduroy pants, and green Hunter wellies,
she opts for coffee. Waves to a man outside
with matching scarf. He's late—most are
already brought in for winter. But there he
stands at the top of the ramp, waders slick
with mud as he





opens the Range Rover's tailgate and heaves
the rope in first.

nothing now depends
on the red mooring buoy
in a wheelbarrow

Lew Watts





Sacred Well

It blooms beyond the waiting room
window between the surgery and the place
where you go with new prescriptions. I see
these scraps of paper transform to petals as
patients congregate to suspend them from
every available space on the stripped- to-
darkest of- dark bare boughs

spiky handwriting
deciphered
apple blossom

Diana Webb





Chitwan

I slide my luggage into the trunk and take the front seat. The taxi driver complains about the heat, and keeps both the windows open. Outside, between fields of ripe mustard, concrete houses stand like patches of weed. Everything is in its place: the hometown, the streets, the front door. Everything is exactly the same, except for the silence in her room.

an old banyan—
roots tangled
beneath its shadow

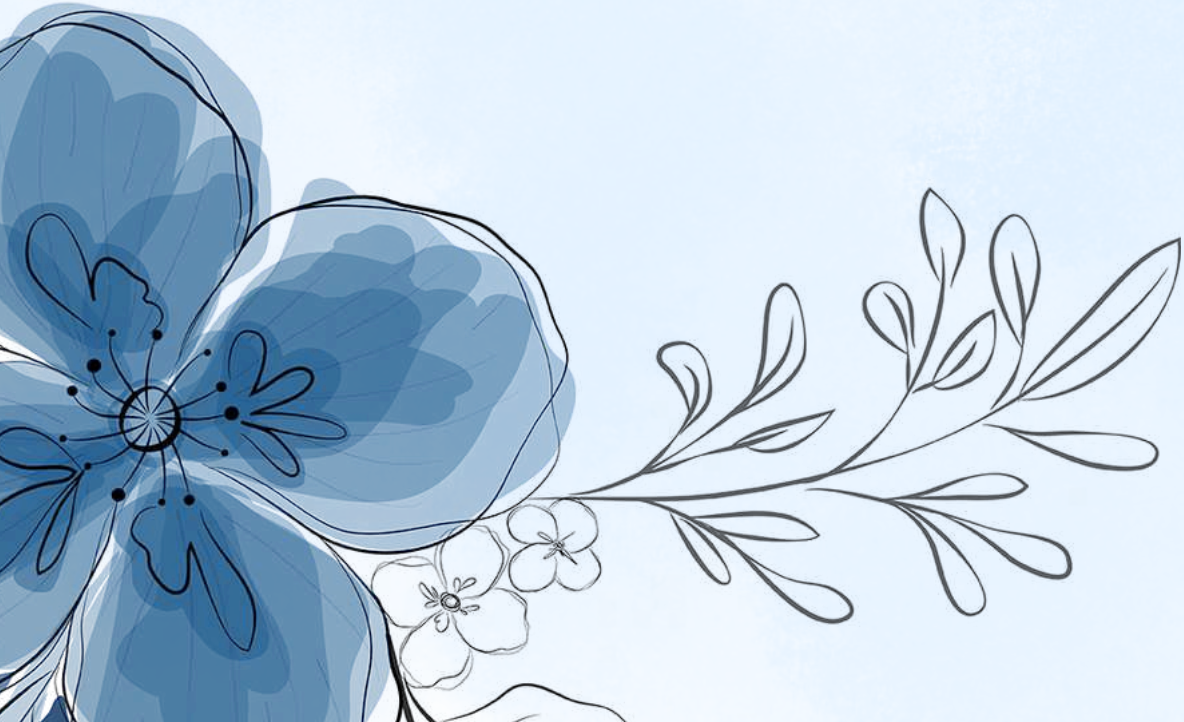
Shiva Bhusal

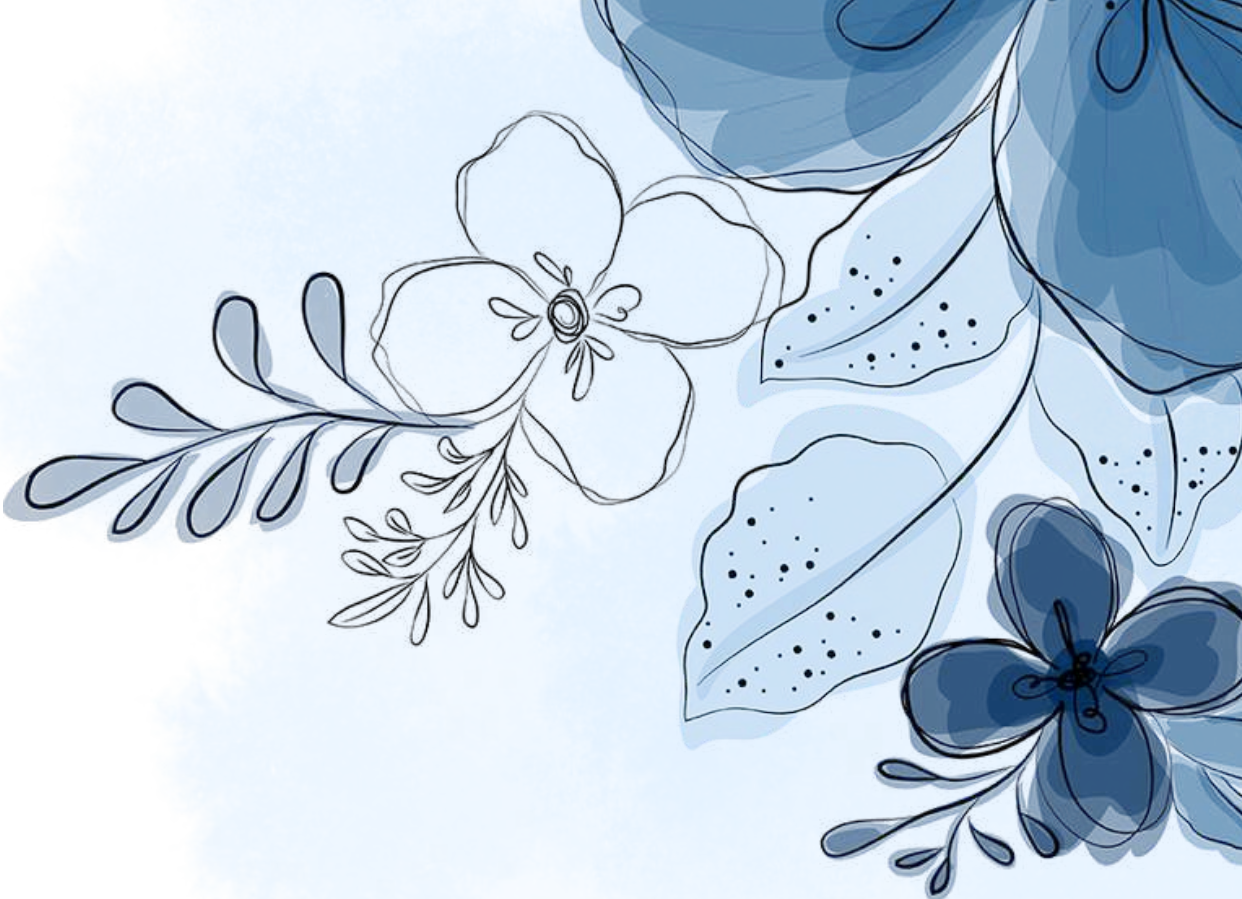




Life lessons

When we visit the military history museum I think of you as a teenager transporting soldiers from Australia to Vietnam. How you learned to use but never used a gun. How you were just a seasick kid who ran away with the navy to escape what you thought was a worse kind of life. Decades later you are still conflicted about those years - still preferring to eat with locals squatting on small plastic street stools. I watch the tender way you shield a daddy-long-legs in the loose cage of your hands, carrying it from the shower to the garden.

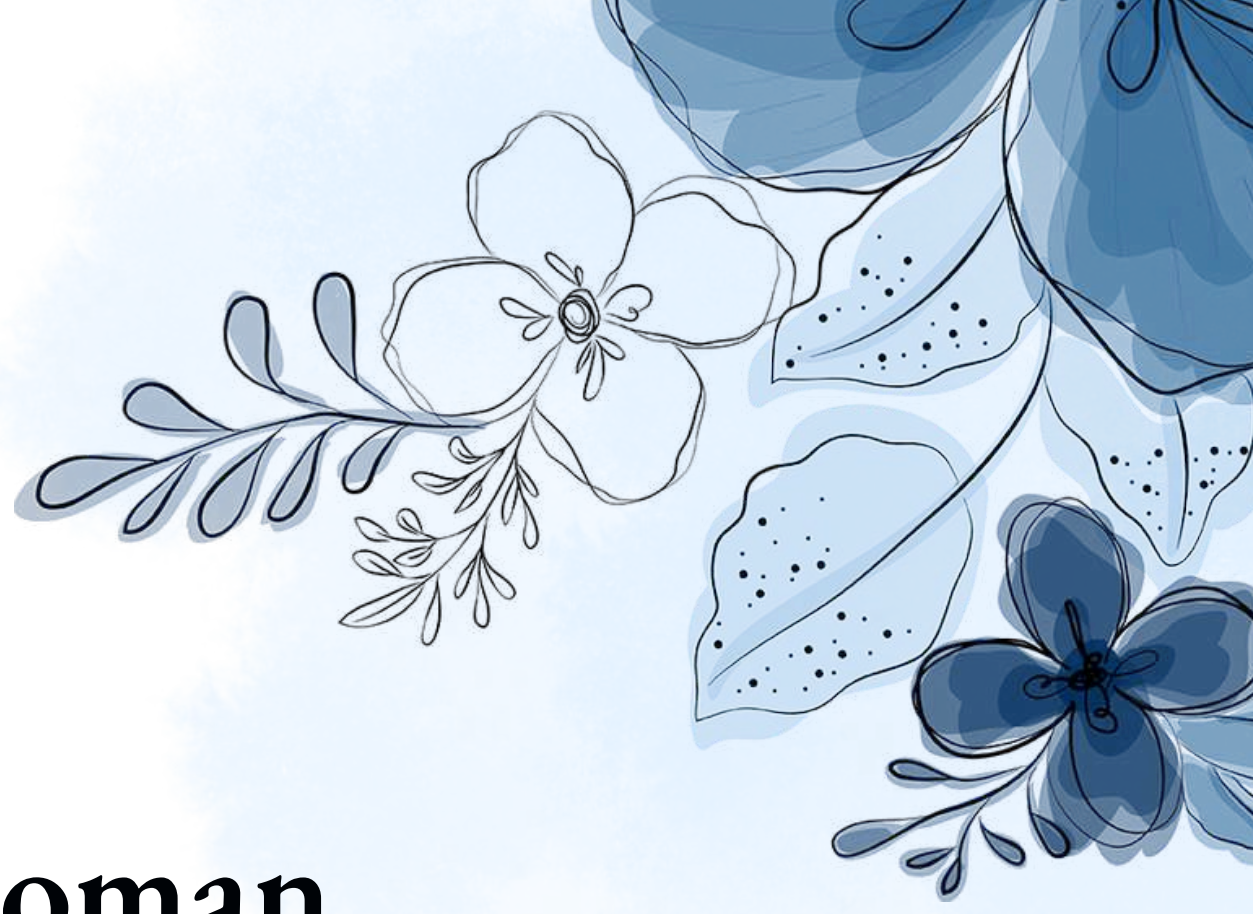




your good jacket
out of reach in the wardrobe
war medals

Jane Williams

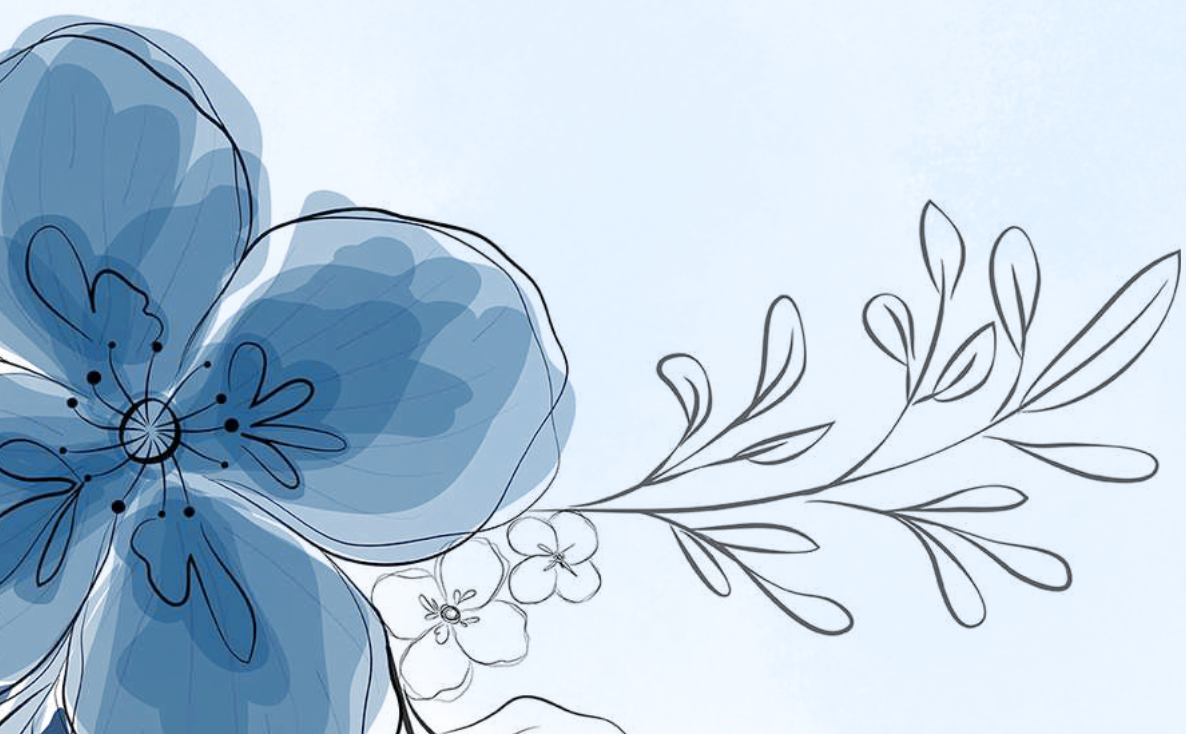


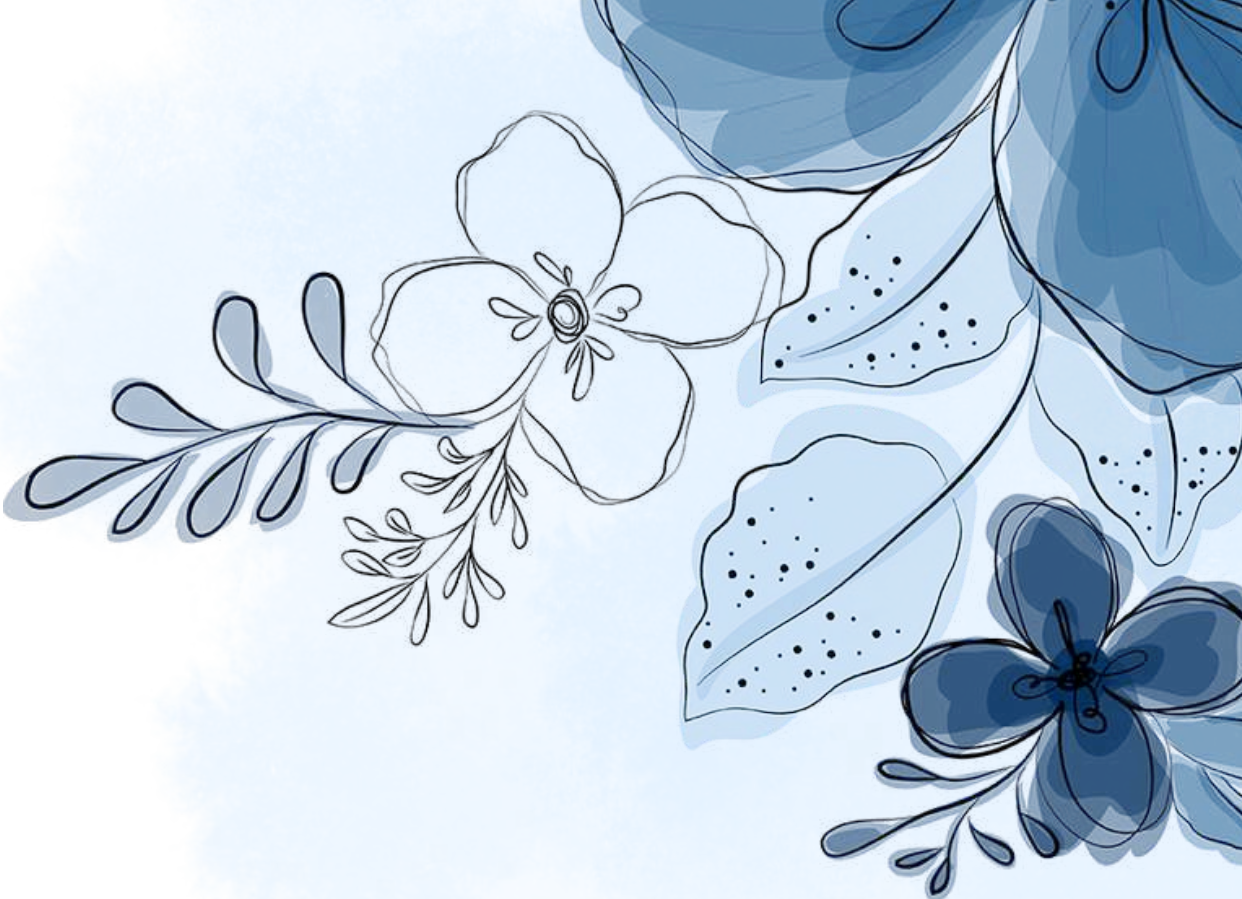


It Came from the Ottoman

She was loafing by my feet—an event so rare I took it as a sign the universe was briefly aligned. My phone was in hand, so I clicked a couple of photos while waiting for that perfect, wide-eyed paint-me-immortal look.

Instead, her mouth began to open. Wider. Wider. Wider. It was as if her jaw had unhinged, rolling her head back into another dimension. For one horrifying heartbeat, I was sure that an alien tongue would shoot out and suction itself to my face.

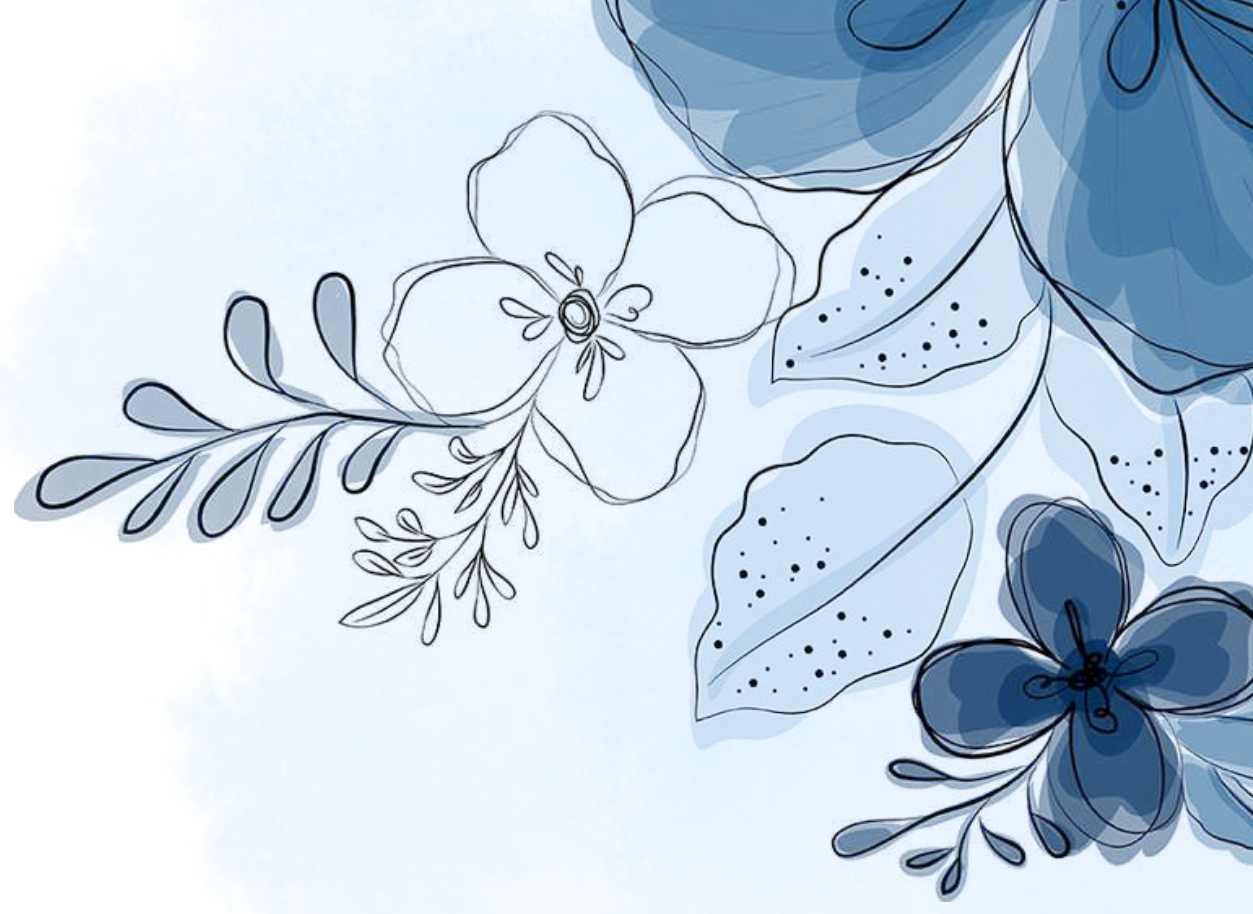




cat yawn—
the galaxy expands
in her throat

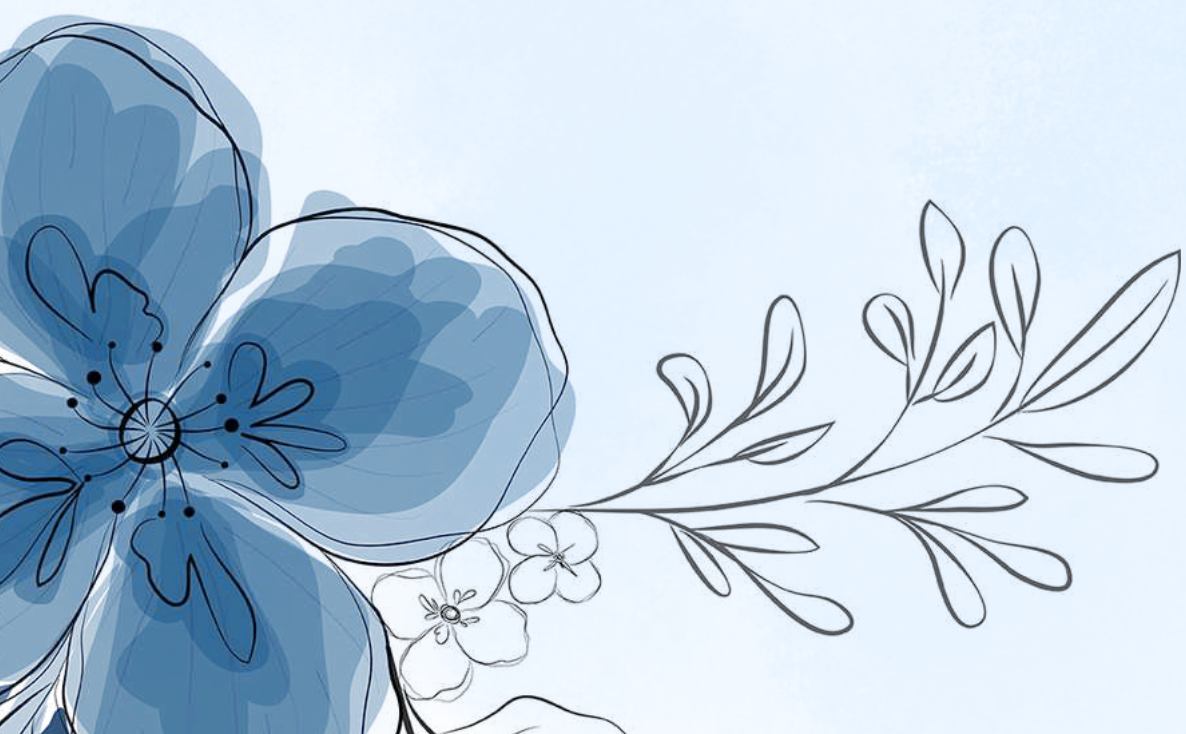
Beverly A. Tift






Risk assessment

Our young host ferries us with luggage one at a time on the back of his scooter to our room in the heart of the Old Quarter. In our sixties and seventies, travelling on a shoestring, I wonder momentarily if we're past all this. Then our senses come alive through the mingling aromas of fish sauce and incense, the cacophony of engines, horns and a resurgence of public loudspeakers. The organised chaos of scooters, cars, tourist buses and cyclos, all weaving around each other, somehow making it work.





Women older than me shouldering baskets
of produce at the ends of bamboo poles, the
hard grace of their practised steps. Traffic
lights and pedestrian crossings seem merely
suggestive. We reinhabit the slick of our
skins in off-season humidity where an
actual temperature of 30 has a real-feel of
40 in the shade. When asked what brings us
back we simply say everything.

quang ganh
family and country balanced
on her shoulders

Jane Williams



Book Review

Beyond Emptiness: A Collection of Mystical Haiku

Nicholas Klacsanzky, Hifsa Ashraf, and Jacob D. Salzer
Lulu, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-257-96902-9

Book Review by Neena Singh

Beyond Emptiness is a collaborative haiku collection that places itself at the confluence of mysticism, silence, and cross-cultural spiritual inquiry. Drawing from Zen Buddhism, Sufism, and a broadly contemplative poetics, the book explores the paradox suggested by its title: that emptiness is not a void but a resonant field where form, perception, and awareness arise and dissolve.

James Hillman once wrote: “Mind is fundamentally poetic in nature”. Soul is “that which deepens.” The poets employ it to explore the inner truth with vivid imagery.

The central theme—emptiness as a lived, experiential reality rather than an abstract concept is consistently sustained throughout the book. Influenced by the Heart Sutra’s assertion that “form is emptiness, emptiness is form,” the poets’ approach śūnyatā not as negation but as presence. This is evident in lines that allow sensory immediacy to open into insight, such as Jacob D. Salzer’s:

before the thought
of you and I
the endless sea

Here the dissolution of subject-object duality is enacted through a primordial image rather than philosophical exposition.

One of the book’s notable strengths lies in its structural innovation.

Each page presents three haiku—one by each poet—arranged in parallel columns. This triadic form encourages multiple reading strategies: following a single poet’s voice, reading horizontally across the page, or attending to the silences between poems. As Michael Dylan Welch writes in the introduction, the spaces between the verses function as “stepping-stones.” This design foregrounds *ma*, the Japanese aesthetic of meaningful pause, and aligns the physical structure of the book with its spiritual intent. In this sense, the book recalls earlier collaborative experiments in linked and dialogic haiku, yet distinguishes itself by resisting narrative linkage in favor of contemplative resonance. This gradual erasure of language is enacted directly in poems such as:

scent of blackberries
more and more
words disappear

Nicholas Klacsanzky

Linguistically, the collection demonstrates a disciplined restraint. The poets largely avoid metaphorical excess, favouring clarity, suggestion, and tonal quietude. Nicholas Klacsanzky's poems often work through paradox and ritual minimalism:

midnight . . .
scent of the incense stick
burning itself

Nicholas Klacsanzky

Here, the self-consuming incense becomes both an image and enactment of impermanence. His work often gestures

toward ritual and mantra, yet avoids didacticism, trusting the reader to enter the moment. Klacsanzky's strength lies in allowing insight to arise organically from simple, well-paced images, maintaining fidelity to haiku's tradition of understatement.

Hifsa Ashraf's contribution brings a distinct Sufi inflection to the collection, enriching its multicultural spiritual texture, bringing terms such as zikr, nafs al-lawwamah, and wajd into the haiku space with remarkable clarity and emotional resonance.

zikr . . .

thrumming of cicadas
from the empty well

Hifsa Ashraf

Her poems frequently engage interior states
—repentance, surrender, ecstasy, while
remaining grounded in concrete imagery:

nafs al-lawwamah
in the rain puddle
my rippling shadow

The use of untranslated spiritual terminology
could risk opacity, yet Hifsa handles these
references with care, supported by a concise
glossary. Rather than alienating the reader,
these terms expand haiku's linguistic field,
reminding us that English-language haiku
continues to evolve through cultural cross-
pollination.

Jacob D. Salzer's poems often bridge the
natural and the ancestral, invoking memory,
lineage, and cosmic scale:

our ancestors
in the river's sound
the Milky Way

Jacob D. Salzer

His work lends the collection a sense of spaciousness, situating personal awareness within larger temporal and cosmic rhythms. At times, Salzer's haiku approaches a lyrical expansiveness that contrasts effectively with the austerity of the other voices.

darkness shapes the timeless river returning
stones

Jacob D. Salzer

There is no place to seek the mind;
It is like the footprints of birds in the sky

(From ZENRINKUSHU cited in R. H. Blyth, Eastern Culture)

An interesting dimension of *Beyond Emptiness* lies in the publication history of the poems themselves. While many of the haiku by Nicholas Klacsanzky and Jacob D. Salzer have appeared previously in leading journals and anthologies, a significant number of Hifsa Ashraf's poems are presented here for the first time. This lends the collection a subtle internal contrast: alongside the resonance of already-tested work, there is a palpable sense of discovery and immediacy. Ashraf's largely unpublished contributions bring a freshness to the collaborative field, allowing the reader to encounter her mystical voice in a more intimate, unmediated way. Rather than creating imbalance, this mix of established and newly unveiled poems enriches the collection, reinforcing its dialogic nature—where seasoned echoes and emerging silences coexist.

In terms of literary value, the collection succeeds in demonstrating how haiku can engage mystical experience without becoming vague or ornamental. The poems largely avoid abstraction, grounding spiritual insight in sensory moments—incense, water, wind, shadow. This approach aligns *Beyond Emptiness* with the lineage of poets such as Matsuo Bashō and later English-language haiku writers who view spirituality as inseparable from attention to the everyday.

The book's thematic coherence can occasionally verge on predictability. With emptiness, silence, ritual, and transcendence recurring throughout, some readers may wish for greater tonal variation or moments of rupture—instances where the mystical frame is unsettled or questioned. This sameness may well be an intentional effect, mirroring the repetitive nature of spiritual practice.

Beyond Emptiness remains a significant contribution to contemporary haiku. Its freshness lies not in novelty for its own sake, but in the confident integration of diverse spiritual traditions within a disciplined haiku practice. The collection invites slow reading, rereading, and reflection—qualities increasingly rare in an age of immediacy.

Ultimately, Beyond Emptiness does not seek to explain emptiness but to enact it. The poems make the reader pause, and recede, leaving the reader with what cannot be said. In doing so, the book honours both the haiku tradition and the mystical insight that words, finally, must give way to silence.



Thanks

A journal like this is built slowly - by many small acts of attention and generosity.

If you've chosen to support Wales Haiku Journal, thank you.

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