

whiptail

journal of the single-line poem



issue 14 · november 2025

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Signals/Sensors v2

1999, Hand-colored etching, 3" x 3"

by mark meyer

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wrensong (dis)solving the hazel thicket

jazz quartet the square before it becomes a bird

syntax the birds land like clockwork

unwinding slowly spiralling herons

cloudirigibles

headlines blur in drenching rain something fox

a white-throated sparrow whistling back the rain

this small creek waves of toadlets

into
settling the
quiet last
leaves cling
of

000
autumn sun's () warm wings
dragonfly () stillness
d
r
e
a
m
i
n
g

don't go to the moon it will disappear

the flies stop moving and glisten

mirror glint from the head of the nail

hummingbird the universe checks in

if that's a gull it's lost

the spider bounces off your face

at the end of the pier fish tails

the stingers seem to find you first

a watch ticks on the salt shaker

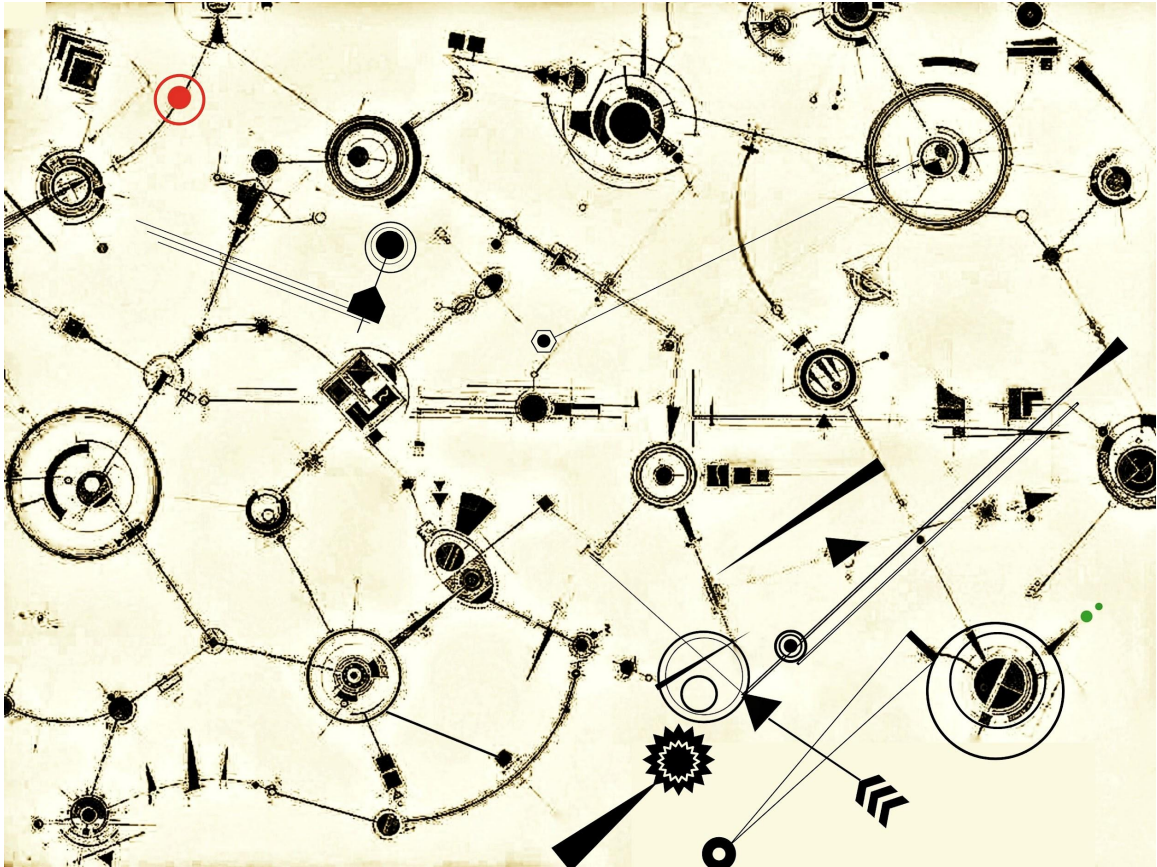
at the train yard all the logs are gone

feeling axe she touches my arm

sn w n thing says s mething

early lustre the night yet not ink of crow

everything turned off the stars tonight



mechanistic defect

punctuation

the robin and the snow and the robin's song again underscored

running full stop to cloud-given shade the unwinding child all pastel and birdsong period

orographic nubibus: sea-coloured conscience apostrophes

He Loves Me (Maybe)

I spot him slouched in the back of debate class, his pencil dangling like a lost modifier. He sports a beanie that half-covers the purple curls he brushes back and scribbles in a notebook frayed like the old gym rope. I bite my bottom lip and gaze at him for a moment. Suddenly, his eyes lock with mine.

black rose	love at first	emo sonnet
a small town's	cafeteria rumor	his guitar riff echoes
speculation	a raven rasps	through time

acorn cradling her hope

inside
sleeping
root
the
want
of
r
a
i
n

rain on the l
eaves

four seasons

(spring)

aching
hinge
the
rattling
gate
clay
field
sediment
stars

(summer)

garden
spade
turning
the
iris
of
a
whale

(fall)

I
am
a
torch
of
blackbirds

(winter)

pitch
blue
butterfly
the
moon's
candled
face

the four winds of mahjong tiles my childhood

family gathering the uninvited

not always near a reason wadded tissues

The Eyewall

exhausted i let myself roll down the years into mum's rose-scented green cotton saree

Half awake, half asleep in the soft light of a winter afternoon running behind a stray puppy falling down I get picked up to a scraped knee stinging nauseated by the smell of raw garlic and lechery on his face tears of humiliation with an angst the laboured breathing of an injured cat the tenderness of her soft whispers puts me under a sheen of moonlight a faint fragrance of fading jasmine and the gentleness of a catcall years later gives rise to an emerging pain and a coldness slicing up my skin to the retching cries of a newborn in the dimness soft sensations of baby skin feeling his pain swallowing the lump in my throat seeing a growing cataract in dad's hazy eyes I see too much . . .

touching down on the sensations between sea and sky the fear of spiralling into a waterspout

a river stone in indian ink the year i was born and left to be born

a half-light life in search of nectar the moth in me

old bones rattling a closet full of atlas moths

Duality

I slip a popular physics book into my tote before trudging through the sun shower. The doctor adheres to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle: once he's spotted, the appointment time zooms past. While I wait amongst coughs and cataracts, I distract myself with a section on the double slit experiment establishing that particles are waves and that waves are particles. The nurse interrupts with the intake form.

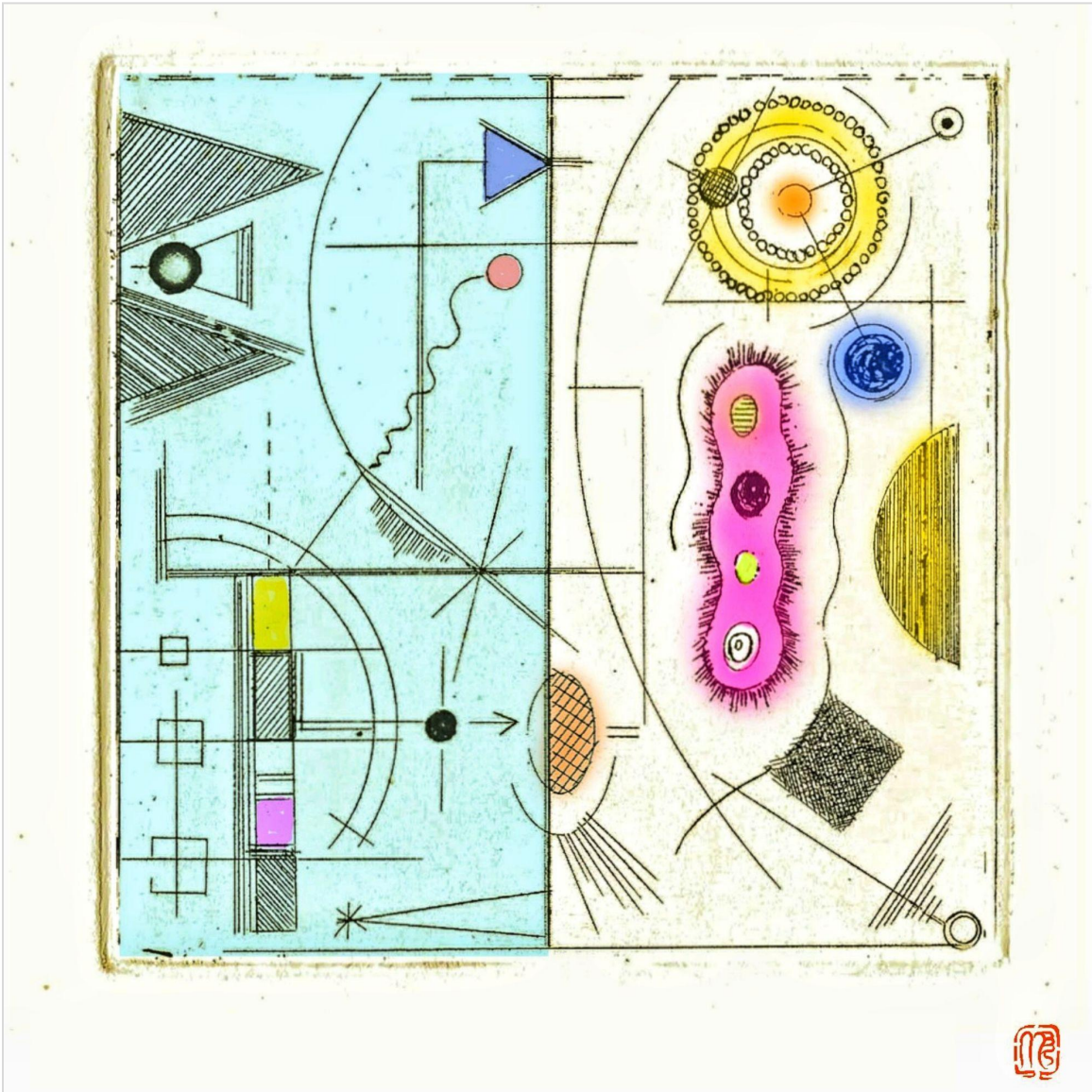
gender boxes I check both

bare trees a cold wind ideation shivers

our hands touching dappled sunlight

in my head in the forest a gentle clearing

the night we met salamander rain



Signals/Sensors v1

forgetting the skin convolutes like a brain

lack of dream space dropping the book awake

chronic seasons especially autumn

rolling hillscape lost between meds

For the birds

Between the uncooperative bladder, occasional leg cramps and hyperactive mind, I wake up multiple times throughout the night. No matter how restless the evening, I walk our dog at 6am. He pulls me out of a slumber-state, ever-ready to plough ahead through the forest surrounding us. It's sweet and moist August air.

morning
mist

Retired, I marvel at where the time goes. Cooking, entertaining, music, theatre, doctor visits, writing, reading, hiking . . . and the day comes to its inevitable close. Even though I download an app on my phone — and identify the Eastern Phoebe nesting outside our front door — I have come to accept I will never be expert at birding.

goldfinch
on
a
limb
or
is
it

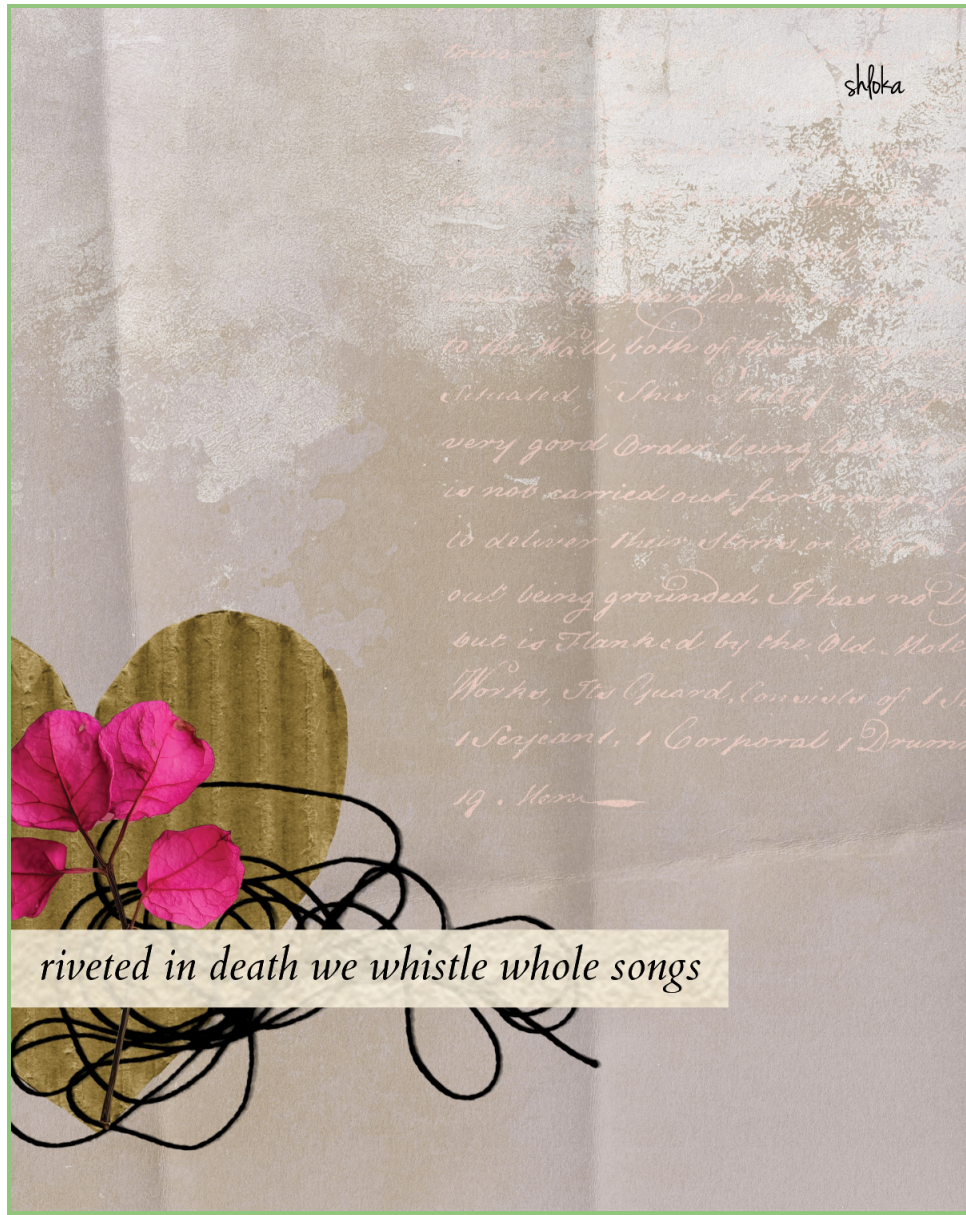
Over the past four years, I've been on some form of chemo. Tolerate it quite well. However my ability to hold space for places, names, dates seems to be waning. I share my concern with my husband. He insists I simply have too much stress in my life.

brain
fog

gathering strength slowly autumn rain refills the pond

clover after clover after clover fields of cancer

(as if) (it was the last) (autumn) (sunset)



riveted in death we whistle whole songs

riveted in death we whistle whole songs

walls
the of
inside mourning
walking
the
morning
sun

barely bluets our brittle infinities

headstone a life as —

self-penned obituary again the snow

unnaming the dead winter rain

first pray tell the
crows dusk my voice
spare the light rain
death ghosts the intelligence



levity / is counteracted / by the woods / are burning

levity / is counteracted / by the woods / are burning

Bombs Away

I open my mouth to speak
but no sound emerges just wind
whistling through cedars and the chirp chirp
of two squirrels tussling acrobats
daring gravity on live wires one
pummeling the other making a dash
his cries muffled plum trees
weighted down with buds of hope
hanging on in fierce gusts with rain enough
to open apple orchards dappled
in yellow light from early mustard greening
hills before our eyes burnt from drought
stricken seasons past the earth
bursting with almost spring life
a still pond to peer into and scry
for peace while the twisted wreckage
of the news sets the pace for lifetimes
the protean tangle of mad hatters
loose in the big house hunters
becoming the hunted
with empty mouths all around.

the foxglove flowers exploding garden buddha

a crack in the carbon sink horsemen ride

dandelions our backup plan

another mouth to feed the milky way

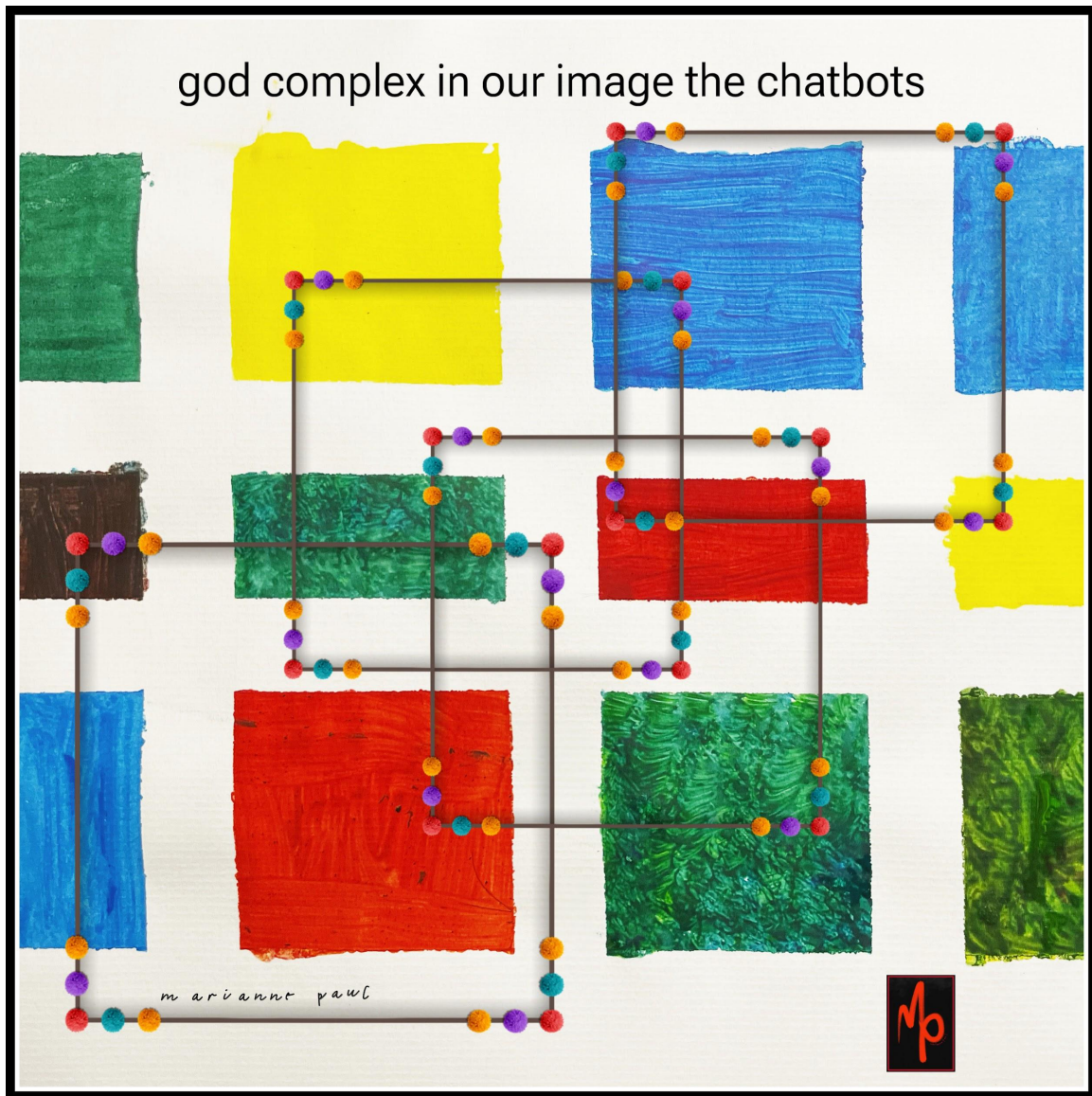
atom bomb tests a cloud in the dragonfly

Practicing Hope: Our Resistance Against ICE

I may not grasp particles. Justice slips through my hands.
Give me a low Christology. Love resists the empires of death.
Rumi says, 'a pot drips what's in it.' No mask covers that.

Shinran's sincere entrusting leaf fall in Chicago

god complex in our image the chatbots



god complex in our image the chatbots

The Four Freedoms

Freedom from Speech

the wintry wind howls for nouns the light in the garage left on alone

Freedom from Want

full sail swallowtail on the prow of the sloop yawls outwind aurora

Freedom from Thought

ho'ar my ear pressed to the ear shaped shell listens to me listening ho'ar

Freedom from Fear

unthinking things candlelight bobs and weaves in the window's westerlies

** Inspired by the Norman Rockwell series based on Franklin Delano Roosevelt's speech "Four Freedoms."*

The Problem with Apples in Paradise

this old tree older than we think rings round saturn

The hitch is that story's already been told. It's as aged as Creation itself. And so I watch as my students bite heartily into the Gala Reds. Chomp down to and all about the core, juice dripping onto young chins.

container ship half empty half full waft of island wind

These boxes the latest consignment from the school meals program. Yet the ripe papayas, mangos and bananas along the roadside are left to fall from their trees. So the knowledge, this time around, I encourage.

deep learning models before all humanity becomes AI



mistdefiance



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