

Ocean

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AWARDS

- 2024 Longlisted, Granum Foundation Prize
- 2024 Finalist, Driftwood Press Adrift Short Story Contest
- 2024 Creative Access Award
- 2023 John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Sponsored Residency, Yaddo
- 2023 Whiting Foundation Grant
- 2023 PARC Foundation Arts Intervention Grant
- 2022 Prairie Fellowship
- 2018 Creative Access Fellowship
- 2017 Craig H. Neilsen Foundation Fellowship
- 2017 Longlisted, Omnidawn Fabulist Fiction Chapbook Contest
- 2015 Creative Access Fellowship
- 2005 Jeanne Lohmann Poetry Award

POETRY PUBLICATIONS

- 2025 "Mask of Bark" *Midsummer: Sacred Grove (forthcoming)*
- 2025 "How to be Greedy About Being Generous" *Instruction Manual for a New Era*
- 2025 "The Broken Celebration" *Tendrils (forthcoming)*
- 2025 "Surgery" *Rogue Agent*
- 2025 "They Gave Us" *Oden (forthcoming)*
- 2025 "Fir Boards" and "Chocolate" *Quotidian (forthcoming)*
- 2024 "Come Great Wind" *Woundscapes*
- 2024 "Hold On" *Magnets and Ladders*
- 2024 "When I Say" *The Globe Review*
- 2024 "Kintsugi" *Réapparition Journal*
- 2024 "Dating an Able-Bodied Person" *Wishbone*
- 2024 "Walk" *Corporeal*
- 2023 "Asterion Deliriant" (reprint) *Process & Place: Headlands at 40*
- 2023 "1894" *Medicine for a Nightmare*
- 2021 "Asterion Deliriant" *Samaritan Press*
- 2021 "Ceremony of the Slain Bear" *Samaritan Press*
- 2021 "I Was Happy the Animals Came Back" *Sheltered in Place*
- 2021 "Ship of Ghosts" *Memorie*
- 2021 "Born" *The Wilderness*
- 2019 "Animal" *Free State Review*
- 2019 "Transformations III" *Duende*
- 2019 "Wheelchair" *Monsterring*
- 2018 "Push" *Intima*
- 2018 "Coral" poem put to film, with Paul Sutfin
- 2017 "Northern Flicker" *On the Edge*
- 2014 "Dreamlife of the Styx" *Cascadian Yule*
- 2012 "Androgyne Primordial" *Hex Magazine*
- 2010 "Wheeling" *Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment*
- 2008 "Hollow Tree" *Hex Magazine*
- 2006 "Port of the Sun" *Cascadian Yule*
- 2005 "Rain" *Fauna*
- 2004 (Untitled) *Mad Hatter's Mercury*

ESSAY

- 2025 "Beyond Meaning" *Katabatik* (forthcoming)
- 2024 "Against Relevance" *Oak Journal*
- 2021 "Hybrids" *NoMaterialism*
- 2020 "Ghosts of Stone" *The Wilderness*
- 2019 "Echoes" *The Wilderness*
- 2012-14 various music reviews: *Vita Ignes Corpus Lignum*
- 2010 "Rain" *Hideous Gnosis*

READINGS

- 2025 Ancient Greece is My Roman Empire, Common Objects, Seattle (forthcoming)
- 2023 *Flow: Art and Ecology Symposium*, Kitteredge Gallery, Tacoma
- 2022 *Hekate's Crossing*, Azoth, Portland
- 2022 Pallas Gallery, San Francisco
- 2022 Ragdale Dance Studio, Chicago
- 2021 *Iran-America Artist Exchange*, Along These Lines, Alberta Abbey Gallery, Portland
- 2021 *Ceremony of the Slain Bear*, An Evening in the Garden, The Lab, Olympia
- 2018 *Open House Readings*, Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco
- 2017 *Push*, Bowery Poetry Club, New York
- 2015 *SFAI 140*, Santa Fe Art Institute, Santa Fe
- 2012 *Asterion Deliriant*, Cryptatropa, Olympia
- 2011 *Port of the Sun*, The Midnight Sun, Olympia
- 2010 *Persephone Partaketh the Shade-Fruit*, Hall of the Woods, Olympia
- 2009 *As Heterocera Unto Sankta Lucia*, Hall of the Woods, Olympia
- 2009 *That the Sunlight May Penetrate Our Bones*, Sizisis, Olympia
- 2007 *Honey from the Dead King*, Hall of the Woods, Olympia
- 2007 *Dream Theater*, Hall of the Woods, Olympia
- 2006 *Earth is the River of Heaven*, Manium, Olympia
- 2006 *Unfolded Bird*, Last Word Books, Olympia
- 2006 *In the Beginningless Beginning*, Last Word Books, Olympia
- 2005 *Jupiter's Sorrows and New Works*, Orca Books, Olympia
- 2005 *Mandorla*, private showing, Olympia

LECTURES

- 2022 Guest lecture, *Dreamblur*, Pacific Northwest College of Art
- 2022 Private fiction tutelage
- 2021 Guest writer, undergraduate creative writing, Portland State University
- 2018-19 Guest writer, undergraduate consciousness studies, The Evergreen State College (novel *Helios* on the syllabus)

BOOKS

- 2023 *Soundcastles*, novella
- 2019 *The Dream Jar*, children's stories (audiobook 2021)
- 2015 *Helios*, novel
- 2006 *Black Hills Cabal*, poetry collection
- 2003 *Jupiter's Sorrows*, chapbook

Ocean's City of Olympia Poet Laureate Application

I have lived in Olympia since fall of 1998. After a car wreck left me paralyzed in the spring of 2000, I devoted myself to a deep focus on poetry. I have given poetry writing workshops in Olympia, given readings at multiple bookstores here, and I continue to deepen my practice as a disabled poet of place. As the City of Olympia's Poet Laureate, I would embrace the role as a civic poet, weaving poetry into the fabric of our community to foster connection, reflection, and resilience. My approach would center on creating inclusive, accessible spaces for poetry that invite diverse voices to explore resilience in the face of personal, social, and environmental challenges. Drawing inspiration from Olympia's natural beauty, cultural vibrancy, and commitment to equity, I would engage the public through interactive events, collaborative projects, and educational workshops that amplify poetry as a tool for healing and empowerment.

Approach to Resilience

Resilience, as the focus of my term, would be explored as a dynamic interplay of endurance, adaptation, and hope. I would frame resilience not as a solitary act but as a collective process rooted in community, storytelling, and connection to place. In Olympia, where the natural world and social justice intersect, I would encourage poetry that reflects on how we persevere through climate change, social inequities, and personal struggles. By highlighting stories of resilience—whether through surviving loss, advocating for change, or finding joy in adversity—I would inspire residents to see poetry as a means to process challenges and envision a stronger, more connected future.

Primary Audience

My primary audience would be Olympia's diverse residents, with a particular focus on youth, marginalized communities, and those who may not typically engage with poetry. Youth are the future of our community, and their creative voices can shape how we address resilience. Marginalized groups, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and low-income residents, often face unique challenges, and their perspectives on resilience are vital to a holistic community narrative. I would also reach out to seniors, veterans, and families, ensuring poetry is accessible to all ages and backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging across Olympia's neighborhoods.

Community Engagement Strategy

My community engagement strategy would prioritize accessibility, collaboration, and visibility through the following initiatives:

1. **Poetry in Public Spaces:** Host pop-up poetry readings and open mics at community hubs like the Olympia Farmers Market, Percival Landing, and the Olympia Armory Creative Campus. These events would invite residents to share or listen to poems about resilience, creating spontaneous moments of connection.
2. **Community Anthology Project:** Launch a city-wide call for poems on resilience, open to all residents, to be compiled into a published anthology. I would partner with local organizations like the Olympia Poetry Network and Inspire Olympia to distribute submission calls and host writing workshops to support contributors. The anthology would be celebrated at a public reading event during Arts Walk.
3. **Collaborative Art Projects:** Work with local artists, musicians, and theater groups to create multimedia poetry installations that explore resilience. For example, a collaboration with the Olympia Salmon Run project could pair poems with visual art to reflect on environmental resilience, displayed at The Olympia Center.

4. **Virtual Engagement:** Host online poetry readings and writing prompts via Zoom and social media to reach those unable to attend in-person events, ensuring inclusivity for remote or homebound residents.
5. **School Partnerships:** Collaborate with the Olympia School District to bring poetry workshops to classrooms, encouraging students to write about personal and community resilience, with selected works featured in school showcases.

These efforts would align with Olympia's Poet Laureate program's emphasis on service over status, using poetry to build community voice and a sense of place, as outlined on the City's website.

Instructional Workshops

To support the theme of resilience, I would design two instructional workshops that empower participants to explore poetry as a tool for reflection and growth. Both would be free, accessible, and tailored to diverse audiences.

1. Workshop: "Writing Resilience: Crafting Poems of Strength and Hope"

- **Objective:** Guide participants in writing poems that explore personal or collective resilience, using nature and community as inspiration.
- **Audience:** Open to all ages, with a focus on adults and seniors, including beginners and experienced writers.
- **Format:** A 2-hour in-person workshop at the Olympia Armory Creative Campus, with a virtual option.
- **Activities:**
 - Begin with a guided meditation inspired by Olympia's natural landscapes (e.g., Capitol Lake or Priest Point Park) to ground participants in place.
 - Discuss examples of resilience-themed poems by poets like Mary Oliver and Joy Harjo, focusing on imagery and narrative.
 - Lead a writing exercise where participants reflect on a moment of personal or community resilience, using prompts like "What grows stronger after breaking?" or "How does Olympia's land or water teach endurance?"
 - Facilitate a sharing circle where participants can read their drafts aloud (optional) and receive constructive feedback.
- **Outcome:** Participants leave with a draft poem and resources for further writing, with an invitation to submit to the community anthology. This workshop supports resilience by encouraging self-expression and connection to place.

2. Workshop: "Youth Voices: Poetry for a Resilient Future"

- **Objective:** Empower youth to write poems about resilience in their lives and communities, fostering creativity and civic engagement.

- **Audience:** Middle and high school students (ages 11–18), partnered with Olympia School District and youth programs like those at The Olympia Center.
- **Format:** A 90-minute in-person workshop at a school or community center, with materials provided.
- **Activities:**
 - Start with an interactive icebreaker where students share one word that represents resilience to them, creating a group word cloud.
 - Read and discuss youth-written poems about overcoming challenges, such as those from the Poetry Out Loud program.
 - Guide students through a writing exercise using prompts like “What makes you feel strong in your community?” or “Write a letter to your future self about surviving today’s challenges.”
 - Encourage collaborative poem creation in small groups, blending individual lines into a collective piece.
 - End with an optional performance where students share their work, recorded for a school or city arts website.
- **Outcome:** Students gain confidence in their creative voices and contribute to a youth poetry showcase, reinforcing resilience through peer support and artistic expression.

Both workshops would be promoted through the City’s Arts & Culture E-News, local libraries, and partnerships with Inspire Olympia, ensuring broad reach. By creating spaces for diverse voices to explore resilience, these workshops would strengthen Olympia’s literary arts community and foster a deeper sense of connection and hope.

In summary, as Olympia’s Poet Laureate, I would serve as a catalyst for community engagement, using poetry to celebrate resilience and amplify underrepresented voices. Through public events, collaborative projects, and inclusive workshops, I would honor Olympia’s commitment to arts, culture, and heritage, creating lasting impacts that resonate across generations.

Drift

We put in the canoes at Swantown
 My strong menfriends hoist me in and we go out into sun glitter
 Leave my wheelchair on the wharf hoping nobody steals it
 A few generations back this slough slogged in tidal flow
 A sulphurous bandolier cinching Olympia's shanties
 Enough mud to drown downtown dredged into flatships and offloaded in the deeps
 Paddling algaged brine out of the marina
 Past Cascade Pole's creosote tailings and buried Squaxin middens
 Ghostly imprint of moonsnail and flooded marshes
 The redwings flown inland once concrete overtook cattail
 Along the barnacled pilings cormorants sun their subfeathers in rows of oily black crucifixions
 Up the inlet dipping palms in crisp mineraly sea
 Waters lapping with the old Salish place names which make the mouth gurgle saltwater and click
 with falling fir cones:

St'č'ás

Bəsčətxʷəd

Sčətxʷəd

Place of tall trees
 Place of black bear
 Place also of these longwhiskered seadogs who come curiousing with their slick mermaid eyes
 Slipping to the surface like oil
 Whispering for the pink meat of coho or early chinook flashing through the shallows
 We skid into pebbles for a morsel under fleshly madrones
 And among all these florid organisms we say yes to life yet again
 The pumping jellies and waving anemones
 All of us saying yes to life for one more day
 And tomorrow too we will say yes
 But for now we slide out again over the shining belly of the Salish Sea
 And with the sun arcing toward the west side
 Ease into the marina
 Until with a lift I'm back in my wheeled steed
 For my own drift over this land of Olympia-town

Coral

Despite what one might think
Or might have thought
Or might one day think
Or do or say or try
Stone we are.
A centrality of calcium holds us up
A scaffold
From which flow the sanguine rivers
That impel all that we might think
Or might have thought
Or will or do or say or try.

When I Say

He works his way down the jetty on hurting musculature
Not knowing why, but still knowing how
Forgetting that he has forgotten

He leans to gather the seaworn wood
The hands moving of themselves
The hands still know

Turning each piece over
Peering, rubbing, dropping most, clutching a few
Does he see the shapes of animals of memories of feelings

His pupils, tiny darkneses in the ends of tunnels
Watch the hands lay out the driftwood
Watch me watch him

I see a jaw, a serpent maybe
Something winged or finned
He has forgotten what to say, how to say it

Eyes bright he points
A manta, a dragon, a wolf—?
A smile of recognition when I say bird

The Broken Celebration

The locust laid to rounds
even the stump blown
and carted to stove—
save one round
left in the grasses

Five years' dormant
You can't see much going on
Until the eyes go soft
and the specifics blur out
Then you see movement
Ants
Flooding their black armored sea over the field
The flattened grasses crackling
and too encroaching from the limns of things
Time surrender
Hourglasses in the blackberries' lashes

Five years the log lays where the tree once stood
Five winters five summers
The bark graying and elephantine
Come the sixth spring a sprout crests from the husk
And reaches its roots through the field

What I'm saying is:
The beings feel it and celebrate
The beings celebrate with their whole selves
The wash of life arisen in that field
(That field too named a name
Just one we can't say)
In that field whose name we can't say
The broken boy
Spinning

Birch

sometimes the snows lay so heavy on the birches
that they freeze in their piths
and the trees bow so deep
that come spring thaw they never rise fully again
they stand arched in the sky
as though in genuflection toward that which bent them

mother grew up under snows so deep she had to tunnel her way to school
she was just a child when the illness set in
the Christmas lights of the city shone through her bedroom window
she couldn't get out of bed for months
when she rose her spine was bent
as though giving to the world at the end of a play a bow

mother shook off the snows and came through her life's passage to the coast
where the years with their seasons passed
now out her window the sea twinkles like strung lights
and from atop the spine crooked like a smile
her head curves toward the sun
like a spray of leaves