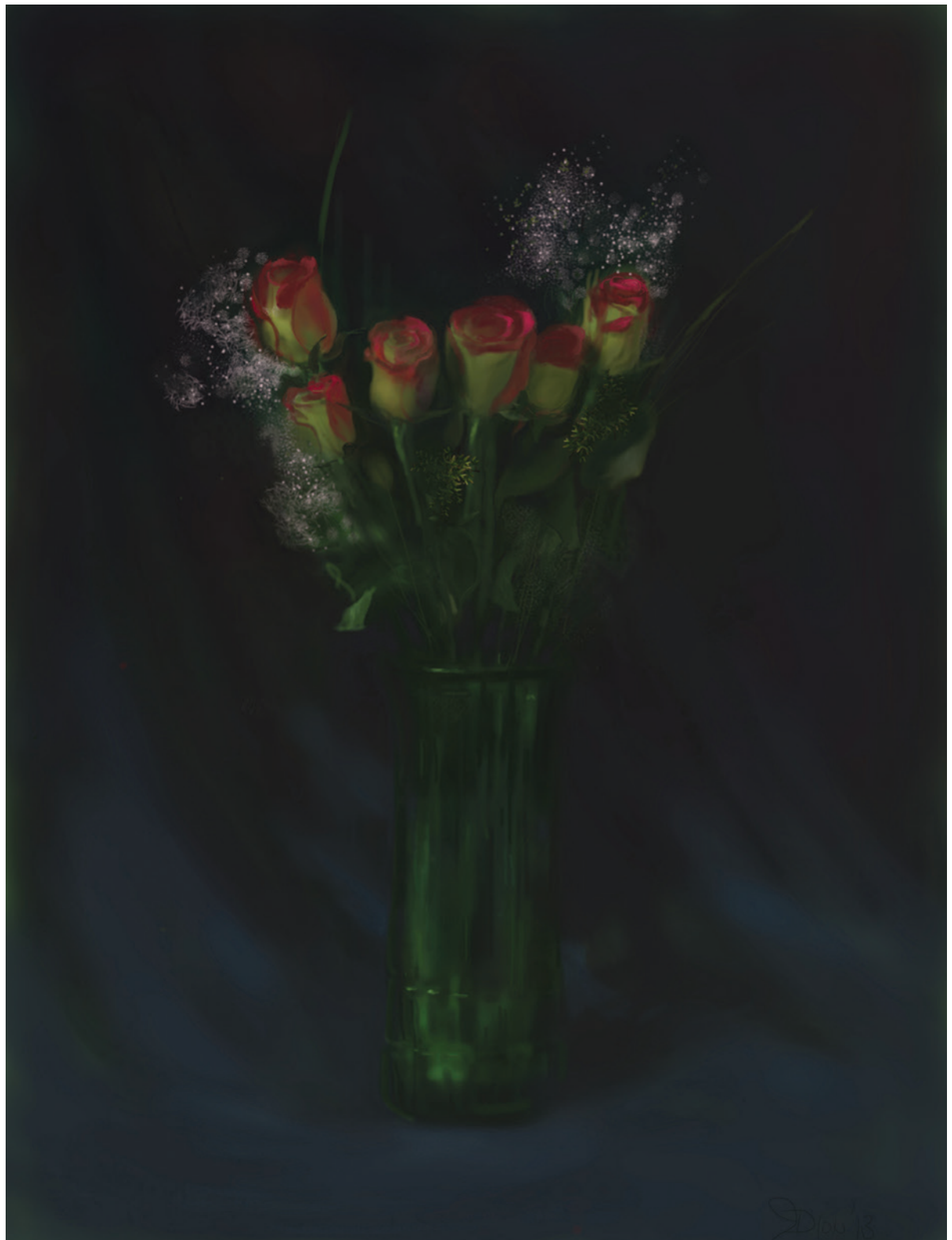
JEFF DION

Red Tea Roses, 2015
iPad drawing using Sketchbook Pro, 8 x 10 in.



COURTESY THE ARTIST

MAGGIE PAUL

Eruptions of Tenderness

An interview with poet Gary Young

MAGGIE PAUL: Though you are highly regarded as a prose poet, you define yourself as a lyric poet. Do you feel the label "prose poet" is too limiting?

GARY YOUNG: I think that all labels are limiting. Once a person, an idea, or works of art are labeled, they lose agency, saddled as they are with someone else's judgment or evaluation. Being labeled a prose poet is one example of this. I'm a poet, a lyric poet. I happen to write prose poems. I prefer to leave it at that, although it's difficult for others to resist a more granular classification. This is partly due to the human need to categorize, but more insidiously, it's a reflection of the balkanization of American poetry. Poetry has become increasingly tribal, and I think too many poets are more than happy to set themselves in one camp or another. I'm not particularly interested in that.

MP: Is your attraction to the prose poem more a reflection of your own sensibility and orientation to the world than an attempt, necessarily, to employ or abide by a certain poetic technique?

GY: The poems in my first two books, *Hands* and *The Dream of a Moral Life*, were written in lines, although there is one prose poem in my first book. After experimenting with other forms, the prose poem became the way I learned to want to write poems—meaningful utterances that simply begin and move horizontally across the page until they stop. I don't title my poems because I don't want to draw any more attention to them than is necessary, and I don't want to lead the reader. Titles are useful (as I frequently instruct my students), but I want my poems to stand naked on the page, without signposts and without any tap dancing. I also think of my work over the past three decades as a single poem in many parts, although that's more a personal conceit than anything else.

MP: In an earlier interview, you said, "I have always considered my prose poems to be very long, one-lined poems, and understanding them as such puts enormous pressure on my getting syntax, grammar, punctuation, and sonority—all the tools one employs in lieu of the line break—just right." Other practitioners of the prose poem claim that it

Gary Young has been awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He's received a Pushcart Prize, and his book of poems *The Dream of a Moral Life* (Copper Beech Press, 1990) won the James D. Phelan Award. He is the author of several other collections of poetry, including *Hands* (Illuminati, 1979); *Days* (Silverfish Review Press, 1997); *Braver Deeds* (Gibbs Smith, 1999), winner the Peregrine Smith Poetry Prize; *No Other Life* (Creative Arts Books, 2002), winner of the William Carlos Williams Award; *Pleasure* (Heyday Books, 2006); and *Even So: New and Selected Poems* (White Pine Press, 2012). His most recent books are *That's What I Thought* (Persea Books, 2018), winner of the Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award, and *Precious Mirror* (White Pine Press, 2018), translations of Kobun Otogawa from the Japanese. In 2009 he received the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. He teaches creative writing and directs the Cowell Press at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC).

affords them more freedom. Can you talk about how form, often considered restrictive, can also be freeing?

GY: Every poetic form makes specific demands and offers specific possibilities. What these poets say about the prose poem could just as well be said about the sonnet. Georges Perec, the French novelist who famously wrote a novel without using a single letter *e*, once said, "I set myself rules in order to be totally free."

MP: There are as many takes on what constitutes a prose poem as there are reasons for writing them. Perhaps most true is poet Joseph Stroud's dismay at so much attention being called to a poem's form. He writes, "Part of the craft is adjusting to the terrain . . . but ultimately . . . what I care about are those poems that make a difference in my life. When I find them, I cherish them. And I try my best to write them."

GY: Amen to that!

MP: The horizontal structure of the nonlineated prose poem, which you refer to as "democratic" in your essay "The Unbroken Line," is also reflected in your watercolors and pen-and-ink drawings. Is your devotion to and appreciation of the unadorned line in visual art connected to how you envision the line in your prose poems?

GY: They are inextricably linked; my practice as a poet reflects my work as a printer, printmaker, and book artist—and vice versa. They're expressions of the same aesthetic and creative urge. In fact, my turn to the prose poem was precipitated by an artist's book that I produced many years ago, *The Geography of Home*—we repurposed the title a few years later for an anthology. That book consists of forty relief prints created by me and my dear friends Gene Holtan and Elizabeth Sanchez. I wrote a text for the book, and we printed it in a single long line for nearly one hundred pages on the back of the images. That long line was reminiscent of my landscapes and made me realize that I wanted my poems to work the same way: to begin and move horizontally across the page until they ended.

I have a deep love for medieval Japanese woodcuts. Precursors to the more famous polychromatic ukiyo-e of the Edo period, they are simple black-and-white prints similar to those produced in Europe around the same time. I have modeled my own woodcuts after them in much the same way that Japanese poetry has served as a model for my poems.

MP: Your poems can span a long period of time yet still deliver us into an illuminated present moment. Zen maintains that space and time are inseparable; Dogen refers to this as "being-time." Can you talk about how you navigate the use of time in your poems?

GY: I like to condense narratives and employ them in the same way that I use images in my poems. By eliminating that "arrow of time" construct, I can compress, merge, or telescope events and present them as I would visual images, discrete rhetorical devices that can carry the same multilevel echo of interlocking memories, histories, and possibilities that visual images generate.

That "illuminated present" you describe is the "lyric moment" that lyric poetry attempts to capture. You can't really stop time, of course. Insofar as poems take time to read, it's an illusion; but one of the mysteries and allures of poetry is its ability to render the suspended moment and make sustained attention to what's really there available to us. When that happens, it feels like magic, and it is.

Dogen's "being-time" sounds suspiciously like Einstein's "space-time," which Einstein's theory of relativity postulated. When we look at it, much of relativity and the theory of quantum physics are prefigured by Buddhist and Hindu thought.

MP: In *Ten Windows*, poet Jane Hirshfield suggests that a useful way to understand a haiku is "to understand each of its parts as pointing toward both world and self." Can you talk about how this gesture appears in your poems, and the types of discoveries that arise as a result?

GY: I think that it's important to remember that we are a part of the world, not distinct intelligences somehow removed from the great scrum of existence. I try to keep that in mind when I write poems. I remember reading Alan Watts, who said, "You are the universe experiencing itself." I like the idea of writing poems both of and for the world.

MP: There are many different selves if one considers the roles life asks of us—such as for you: poet, painter, husband, parent, son. Can you talk a bit about how the family dynamic and the roles you perform as a poet, parent, and husband have contributed to your work?

GY: In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus asks a man possessed by demons, "What's your name?" And the man answers, "My name is Legion, for we are many." I've always identified with that man. I think that we are all made up of many parts—including many demons, and hopefully an angel or two. I have tried to integrate my life as a husband, a parent, a teacher, and all the other aspects of my existence with the foundational feature of my life as a poet and an artist.

As any poet with children can attest, your children feed you poems in a steady stream. If it had been possible, I'd have had a dozen of them.

MP: Sam Hamill described the poems in *Days* as "transparent and refreshing," claiming "these are poems that Bashō would admire." When and how did your interest in haiku, Bashō, and the Tang dynasty originate?

GY: I don't know if they still hold book sales in school libraries, but when I was in junior high school, there was sale in our library at Frances E. Willard Jr. High, and for whatever reason, I bought a copy of *The Jade Mountain*, translations of poems from the Tang dynasty by Witter Bynner, and Oscar Williams's *Immortal Poems of the English Language*. I devoured them and decided that I wanted to be a poet. I read every poetry book that I could get my hands on at the public library, and also began reading books about Zen Buddhism. Those two books set the path for my life, and I still have them.

> *She took my two hands in hers, pressed and caressed them as if she were bathing me. I held hers as mine were held, stroked her knuckles, her palms, then realized the finger I lightly traced was my own. How strange to find I could show myself such tenderness.*
>
> —from *Days*

MP: Galway Kinnell once said, "The secret title of every good poem might be 'Tenderness.'" This makes me think of your work, and the intimacy it achieves, poem by poem, book by book. Even poems addressing emotional and physical deaths due to illness or violence have, at their center, some degree of tenderness. Why do you think this happens in your poems, and does it ever surprise you?

GY: I think that tenderness is one of the most underappreciated emotional responses available to us. Tenderness is an expression of active empathy. To practice it, we must accept the burden of someone else's pain—or pleasure—but without ego, which says, "I know just how you feel!" We can't know the depth of someone else's pain, or their needs, but we can recognize that they exist, and offer what succor or affection we can without judgment or expectation. The world can be a brutal place, and tenderness is a balm, deceptively simple, but profoundly affecting.

I don't know *why* this happens in my poems, though I'm happy that you think that it does. But I *am* sometimes surprised by an eruption of tenderness.

> *Hummingbirds build their nests under the ferns; little cups of lichen, feathers and moss. They cannot walk, but they can hover in the air. They can fly forward and fly back, and when they move into the light, their frail bodies shine with iridescence. Watching them in the garden, my own voice startles me saying, look, there's my heart.*
>
> —From *No Other Life*

MP: A transparent lucidity comes through your work—a simple utterance of what exists—in part because of your narrator's nonjudgmental stance. Time, memory, geography, and fate come together in a synthesis of images, which invites the reader to enter the poem's narrative and assess the characters and situation for themselves. How do you refrain from judging experiences that clearly reveal cruelty or injustice?

GY: When I was in college, I became fascinated with Carl Jung and his concept of the collective unconscious. I studied alchemy, mysticism, Gnosticism, and other esoterica. I also read the French and Spanish surrealists, and the protosurrealists like Arthur Rimbaud and Comte de Lautréamont—both of them prose poets, interestingly. I became fascinated with surrealism, with the fantastic

and the macabre, and I tried to write poems that mined my subconscious and my dreams to reveal the world hidden behind this world. Even in graduate school I wrote loosely in a style of American surrealism then popular, but it left me unsatisfied. Ultimately, I concluded that reality is much more interesting than anything that I can imagine, and I have tried to describe the world as I experience it with as much clarity and objectivity as I can. The world is so rich in correspondences and constellations of meaning. Entering a poem without judgment or expectation allows me to write poems that honor the world and the people I share it with, to be a piece of the mystery.

MP: The personal pronoun *I* is used liberally in your poems. Yet your poems avoid self-absorption. Is this one of the ways you take the reader into your confidence?

GY: I hope it works that way in my poems. It's also an attempt to accept responsibility for what's being said. I often quote people in my poems (my children, friends, strangers), but I never use quotation marks; I want the reader to remember that it's me talking, or least the "me" that pretends to be the person writing the poem they're reading. I like to think that because of this, the reader will trust me—or at least recognize that I'm trying to be honest.

MP: Poems revealing your mother's complex character are among your most moving. For example, in *Braver Deeds*, the speaker reveals that even as you are at the brink of death, it is your mother who garners sympathy and attention. Another poem describes how she instructed you, as young boy, to run back into a burning house to save your sister. She is detached from the risk this imposes on you. In an emblematic poem about saving money to give your mother violets, she says, "they're beautiful, but they never last."

Has your mother's ability to deliver such contradictions in a single statement taught you the value of the sentence to contain a Whitmanesque multitude?

GY: I've never really thought about my mother in that way; that's an interesting notion. My mother was an extreme narcissist who insisted on being the center of attention, but she was also a very damaged human being with deep insecurities. Her own mother was an unfeeling, ruthless stage mother, whose affections were mercenary and deeply hurtful. She exploited my mother and my mother's sister from the time they were children, and she tried to take my mother's earnings from her recordings and performances even after my mother married. My mother left *her* mother to live with my father, an even greater narcissist than she was, and a sociopath to boot. My mother lived in a somewhat demented environment all of her life, and she was adept at shuttling between the performative life of an entertainer and the coarse, frequently violent life at home. She taught me a lot of things, and I suppose that embracing contradictions was chief among them.

MP: In "My mother entertained the troops in Vietnam," your mother claims, "I've never felt as safe as I did while I was there. . . . those boys couldn't do enough for me; they treated me like a queen." The poem ends not in the voice of the mother, but in that of the speaker, who adds matter-of-factly, "I still have a picture of the one who gave her his life." This piece of shocking information is delivered with the psychic distance of a reporter. How has the distance she put between herself and others affected you?

GY: Because my father was a violent alcoholic and my mother was an abused depressive who became addicted to alcohol and drugs, reality was always fungible in our household. Both of my parents put on one face for the outside world and tried to maintain that facade even in front of one another, their children, and their own parents. Lies and distortions of the truth were told and maintained, and my siblings and I were expected to keep secrets, even from ourselves. Breaking out of that dynamic was necessary but painful and required a great deal of psychic energy and soul-searching. I had to train myself to see things as they really are—marrying a woman for whom emotional honesty is a paramount virtue helped tremendously. I also needed to recognize the damage and the pain that my parents had each suffered and forgive them for being who they had become.

MP: Some of your poems address health crises; life-and-death diagnoses teeter in the balance. Several poems paint scenes of near-death experiences—drownings, lost children, children with cancer. Have health issues and the illnesses of loved ones kept your sense of awe and wonder alive, as in the poem "Two girls were struck by lightning," which concludes with, "It's a miracle they were born at all."

GY: Illness—my own, and that of others—is a recurrent theme in my poems. I would probably say that illness has generated as much paranoia and dread in me as it has awe, but being mortal, illness, injury, and ultimately death are all parts of the package. If we don't come to terms with that, life will be even harder than it already is.

MP: In "This tumor is smaller" from *In the Face of It* (C&C Press, 2008), the doctor explains that "Every body is a machine. . . . when they break, I fix them. But there's an art to it." We don't know what the speaker thinks or feels, just the truth of the exchange and a silence laden with the possibility of healing, or not healing. Is this your invitation to us to "be" with the unknown, to accept negative capability and enter into the humility of what it is to be human?

GY: In the case of this poem, my surgeon was challenging me to keep fighting. The odds of my survival—of cancer, in this case—were extremely slim. But my doctor had been an army surgeon, and I'm sure he had seen some soldiers who gave up and others who found an inner strength to battle on. In this situation, I think he was pushing me to find the reserves I would need to prevail. I'm alive; who's to say it didn't work?

I offer God what happens in time.

MP: From the early poem "When I was five," where it occurs to the child-speaker that "God could lose me like a sweater," to the opening poem of *If He Had*—the final book in *No Other Life*—which begins, "I am not an incidental thought of God's," your poems acknowledge that the powerful presence of God underlies the mystery of life's coincidences. Can you talk about your sense of God as a divinity that transcends the religion with which you grew up?

GY: I was raised in the Methodist church—my grandfather was a Methodist minister—and although I abandoned my faith when I was about twelve, it left a scar, or at least a stain, on my psyche. The cadences of the Bible still ring in my ears and remain a major influence on my poetry. I later studied Catholic writers—contemporary philosophers such as Jacques Maritain and Thomas Merton and, of course, Thomas Aquinas. I was particularly attracted to the Scholastics and their rigorous devotion to specificity and precision of language. Not having been raised Catholic, I was not burdened with memories of having been scolded by nuns in elementary school, or tormented by fears of damnation, which several Catholic friends of mine endured. It opened a whole new way of thinking, and without the guilt!

Like Simone Weil, the French philosopher and mystic, I feel that there is much of me that is unready for God. If there *is* a God, one assumes that he—she? they?—should be available, but that doesn't always seem to be the case. In any event, few of us would have the capacity to recognize God if we passed him on the street. An old Buddhist monk once told his disciples, "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him." I sympathize with that.

My faith, such as it is, has been molded by many disciplines over my life: by Christianity in childhood; by Buddhism, which I've studied and practiced imperfectly for most of my adult life; by my wife's Judaism; and by Daoism, which resonates with my own deepest convictions. I suppose I'm just a skeptical believer in the forces that move us. God shows up in my poems when I can't find an alternative.

MP: You have collaborated with poet Christopher Buckley on three books, two of which center around California: *The Geography of Home: California's Poetry of Place* (Heyday Books, 1999) and *Bear Flag Republic: Prose Poems and Poetics from California* (Greenhouse Review Press, 2008). Both of these anthologies include commentary, biography, and sometimes personal treatises by the poets on their own work. As poet Dana Gioia's *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* did, these anthologies place California with its particular history, culture, and landscape firmly on the map of essential American poetry. How did *Bear Flag Republic* come about?

GY: Chris and I are Californians born and bred, and, like many native Californians, we can get enthusiastic about our home state. We had great success with *The Geography of Home: California's Poetry of Place*, and we decided to do another anthology that focused on the wonderful work of poets in our state writing prose poems. We began by including poems that we knew and loved, but once we started searching, we were overwhelmed by the tremendously innovative work being done by California prose poets. We decided to include essays with the anthology, and in truth, those essays could easily have comprised their own volume. We worked on that project for several years.

MP: One compelling statement from the introduction to *Bear Flag Republic* pertains to haiku and the object poem in prose: both are usually "written away from the writer's desk and in the presence of the object" where "the conscious mind gives up, at least to a degree, the adversary position it usually adopts toward the unconscious, and a certain harmony between the two takes place." Do your compositions typically arrive when you are outside in nature/the world, when you are at your desk, or both?

GY: I seldom sit down at the computer and just start writing. I have always carried a notebook with me, and I jot down images, ideas, dreams, memories—as well as recipes, phone numbers, and whatever else I don't want to forget. When I think I have something that might become a poem, I transfer my notes to the computer and work on the poem from there.

When I first started writing, I used a typewriter and would type up a draft, make notes and emendations by hand, type up a new draft, and scribble on that until the poem was done. I work essentially the same way with the computer, printing out drafts, revising by hand, and repeating until the poem is finished.

MP: Your and Christopher Buckley's book *One for the Money: The Sentence as a Poetic Form* (Lynx House Press, 2012) urges us to free our relationship to, and perception of, the sentence as a limited unit of meaning and recognize its wide-ranging, unstoppable power. Your one-line poem "I would live forever if I could, but not like this," from the collection *If He Had*, is a perfect example. Has the meaning of "this" changed for you since this poem was written?

GY: No, it hasn't changed at all. Life is hard, and blessedly brief. Once is enough.

MP:

> *I have long thought of the world as a huge begging bowl, and in this small valley, I feel as if the earth itself has become the bowl, and I am living in the middle of it, alone with the gift of my own life.*

How did this one-line poem from *New Mexico Journal: Rio Vallecitos* (C & C Press, 2009) come about?

GY: I wrote this poem while on a residency in New Mexico. I was working on my book *Braver Deeds*, which I finished while I was there. That book is an exploration of violence, and it was difficult to write. To clear my head while I worked on it, I kept a poetic diary of my time there, and though this poem may have been polished up a bit, I suspect that it came out pretty much as it now stands.

MP: A translation of a poem by Li Bai (701–762) appears in a recent issue of *Catamaran*. It was a collaboration between you and the Chinese writer Yanwen Xu. Do you typically collaborate with Chinese or Japanese poets when translating such works?

GY: I published a book of translations from the Japanese a few years ago, and a book of translations from the ancient Chinese will be published next year by White Pine Press. In both instances I collaborated with native speakers. In the case of my new book, I worked with my friend Yanwen Xu, a student at UCSC. My approach was to first make a translation of each character, then we worked on a gloss of what's going on in the poem, and finally I tried to capture as faithfully as possible the literal meaning and the subterranean meanings—allusions to Buddhism or Taoism, commentary on then-current politics, friendships, and personal history—in translations that work as poems in English. As many have said, there is no better way to understand how a poem works than to take one apart and put it back together in your native tongue.

MP: Can you share how the stylistic elements of Japanese and Chinese poetry are reflected in your prose poems?

GY: Because the Chinese and Japanese poetry that I have studied and admire was originally written in strict poetic forms—haiku, tanka, haibun, shih—the stylistic influences have been necessarily oblique. But what has always attracted me, particularly with Japanese poetry, is its brevity and concision and the seemingly effortless movement from one part of a poem to the next. In Chinese poetry there is an abundance of the tenderness you've mentioned. So many poems about saying goodbye to friends, to sharing a last cup of wine with them and lamenting when they're gone. In both traditions there is a great appreciation of nature and natural forces that has always resonated with me. Japanese haibun, a mixture of haiku and poetic prose, in particular, Bashō's *Narrow Road to the Far North* and Issa's *The Year of My Life*, have inspired much of my work in the prose poem.

MP: Have poets Gary Snyder and Jack Gilbert had an impact on your work and your life as friends and colleagues?

GY: I've known Gary Snyder for many years, and though I never met Jack Gilbert, I've always admired his poetry. Both men have had an enormous impact on American poetry and on American poets, and I'm no exception. I've lived in the Santa Cruz Mountains for decades, and Snyder's descriptions and evocation of life surrounded by "mountains and rivers" have been a touchstone for me ever since I started writing.

MP: Can you share how you came to know Santa Cruz poet Morton Marcus?

GY: I first met Morton Marcus at a poetry reading in the early seventies while I was in college, but I'm sure it left no impression on him; I was just a kid with dreams of being a poet. I loved Mort's first book, *Origins*, which I put on my book list for my MFA exam. After I received my degree and returned to Santa Cruz, I ran into Mort often at readings and other cultural events. I always felt he was kinder and more accepting of me than I deserved. We read together frequently over the years, and we both taught several times at the summer Writers' Conference at Foothill College, where the two of us got to know each other well. Mort and I each had books published by the same publisher at one point. We took our poetry show on the road many times as a consequence, and always had a ball. The conversations, especially over meals after our readings, were the highlight of those trips. Mort was an inspiration, and kind of poetic big brother, though he always treated me as an equal, even when I was just starting out. I've never forgotten that.

MP: How has the poetry of Kenneth Rexroth influenced your work? Did you know Rexroth personally during your time in the Bay Area?

GY: I only met Rexroth once, when he read at the Santa Cruz Poetry Festival in the early seventies, but I've been reading his poems and his translations from the Japanese and Chinese since I was in high school. His influence in the Bay Area has never waned, and I hope that his influence will continue to grow. He was an American original and a great poet, translator, and essayist. He's one of the brightest stars in my personal pantheon.

MP: What effect have the CZU fires of 2020 had on your home and printing press, both of which are located in the Santa Cruz Mountains? Has the forecast for imminent fires in the future changed your relationship to place, particularly the area you call home?

GY: The devastating CZU Lightning Complex Fire began with a few smaller blazes. One of them, the Warrenella Fire, started just over the ridge from our house. We stayed up all night watching the lightning and knew that we were in for trouble. Both of our adult children had moved home due to COVID, and as the fire threatened the house, we evacuated to town. For two weeks we didn't know if our house was standing or not. In the end, the fire wrapped around our property. Dozens of friends close by lost their homes. My wife's studio was singed, and my studio was heavily damaged by branches thrown

through the roof by the high winds. Our house and studios were filled with soot and ash, and the smoke smell was unbearable. We were out of the house for over four months while it was being cleaned and repaired. Now that we're home, I admit that my relationship with the place has changed. I've lived in Bonny Doon for over forty years, and this was our third fire. I don't know if I'm up for another one. My sons have been putting pressure on me to move off the mountain for a while, and for the first time, I am entertaining the possibility. Of course, with home prices sky-high in Santa Cruz, the big question is, where to move?

MP: The poem "Eating Wild Mushrooms" appeared early on in your book *The Dream of a Moral Life* (Copper Beech Press, 1990). With the release of the film *Fantastic Fungi* a few years ago, the subject of mushrooms has become topical. Do you continue to search for wild mushrooms in the Santa Cruz Mountains?

GY: Oh, yes, I still hunt them, and when I find edible mushrooms, I cook them and devour them with great enthusiasm. I like the idea that mushrooms have become topical, but I'm determined not to write about them as much as I have in the past. After my last book came out, my dear friend Stephen Kessler said, "No more damn mushroom poems," so I'm taking a moratorium, at least until it rains again.

MP: Both of your sons are poets. What advice, if they ask, do you offer regarding how to be a poet in a capitalistic society?

GY: I tell them the same thing that I tell my students: keep your day job.

Both of my sons are terrific poets, but that's not all they are. My oldest son, Jake, is a superb literary critic, a teacher, editor, but also a marvelous cook and a certified specialist of wine. My youngest son, Cooper, in addition to writing poetry, is a mathematician, a teacher, and a fabulous dancer. Poetry should add to your life, not take the place of it.

It's more difficult to sell out as a poet than some people think, which is one of its great virtues. Capitalism tries to put a money value on everything, and then turn a profit from it. Poetry resists this, though that may be changing.

MP: Would you share what you're working on now and what projects you look forward to in the future?

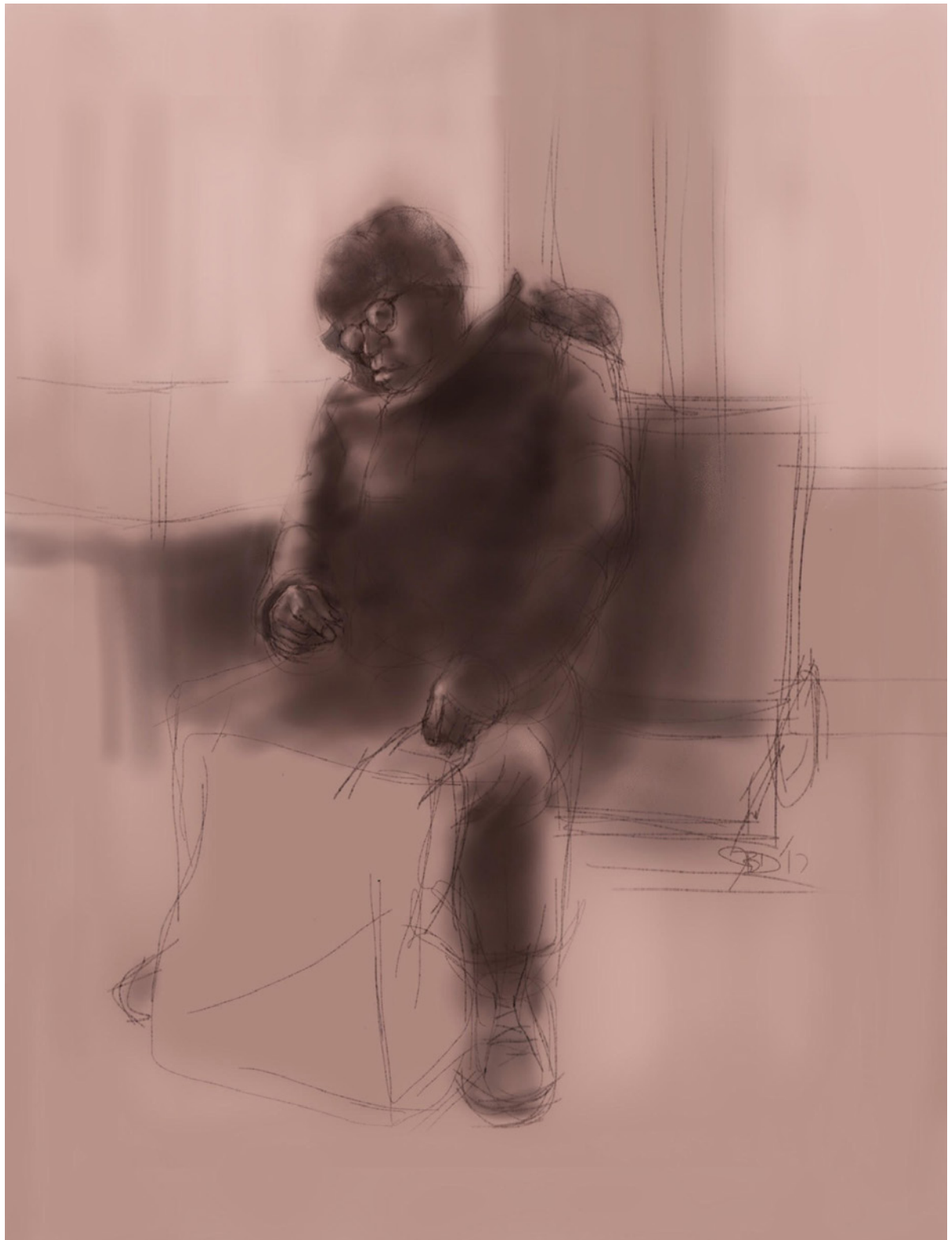
GY: I'm currently working on a new book of poems titled "American Analects." The collection revolves around my dear friend and mentor Gene Holtan, who died about five years ago. In addition to being a great artist, Gene was always ready with inventive and surprising observations and turns of phrase, which I am trying to recollect and capture. My inspiration for the collection is, of course, *The Analects* of Confucius. In that book, in addition to his advice for living and for governing, Confucius expresses admiration for many of his friends and disciples, and I've written several poems about Gene and other old friends whom I've lost. I've reached an age where that list is long.

Several artist's books were put on hold during the pandemic, including a book of drawings and poems called "New Mexico Journal," which I'm producing in collaboration with the book artist and publisher Mathew Cohen. I'm finishing the layout for a new book by Brad Crenshaw, *Memphis Shoals*, which should be available early next year, and though he swears he has no more ideas for collaborations, Chris Buckley and I will almost surely wind up doing some project or other together. It's good to be busy, and there's always something to do.

Maggie Paul is the author of *Borrowed World* (Hummingbird Press, 2011), *Scrimshaw* (Hummingbird Press, 2020), and the chapbook *Stones from the Baskets of Others* (Black Dirt Press, 2000). Her poetry, reviews, and interviews have appeared in *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Rattle*, *Monterey Poetry Review*, *Porter Gulch Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *phren-Z*, *SALT*, *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche*, and *Protest 2021* (Moonstone Press, 2021). A cofounder of Poetry Santa Cruz, she works as an education consultant and writing coach in Santa Cruz, California.

JEFF DION

Mid Winter's Bus Ride, 2017
iPad drawing using Sketchbook Pro, 8 x 10 in.



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