



Claire Pentecost

# Backing Out of a Hole: Some Poems

*I write to invigorate my attention, to refresh my relationship to language and, in the words of N. Scott Momaday, “to restore candor to the mind.”*

\*\*\*

## Sense Memory

The world is wet, and trees are dripping sound.  
 Or was it silent on the day  
 I walked a path into a chorus  
 of sticks? bringing only my bare eyes,  
 the spirals of my gaping ears,  
 my raincoat pockets empty of intent.  
 The smell of falling life opens my face.  
 Or did it simply fill the holes in my head  
 smothering the fires of trash  
 that foul the human scent?  
 I am here. I was there  
 to see the thirteen-year emergence.  
 Hollow forms adorn the silent trunks and cling  
 to the least twigs, remnants of a long sleep,  
 sketched on the air with fine lines.  
 I'm drawn into the details that spell insect  
 around the cavity of final molt, split  
 by living contents who have gained the crowns  
 of trees where they will call, and mate, and die.  
 My fingers probe the skeletons, detaching them  
 with care to leave the hardened ghost intact.  
 Or did I grab and yank them from their perch?  
 Stuffing my pockets for a thoughtless cause,  
 what normally eludes my eyes, the merest bug  
 who crowds whole forests into human ears.

## deferred consequences arriving momentarily

it was just another day  
 over the land cursed by coal  
 a procession of dust clouds  
 startled the forested mountain



and when the smoke lifted  
 the mountain was gone  
 a silent drama  
 from the office  
 and in the lunchroom  
 they were discussing  
 how drone pilots  
 have post-traumatic stress  
 and the plastic cup  
 how we knew it would not be recycled  
 even as we put it  
 now in the correct bin  
 now in the whale's big house  
 now in the sea turtle  
 now fragmented and bewitching  
 the albatross



maritime superstition  
 held that it's bad luck  
 to kill an albatross  
 in truth sailors killed and ate them in great numbers  
 the dynamic soaring of these birds is inspiring  
 to engineers especially in the design  
 of drones and unmanned aircraft  
 when I was a kid I saw a movie where  
 the villain was a well-fed king



in an ornate brocade suit  
 who laughed  
 when the hero ran a sword  
 through his brocade breast  
 he just laughed  
 because his heart  
 was elsewhere  
 even as he ran loose  
 making mayhem  
 his heart was beating  
 like a panicked newborn  
 alone and naked  
 in a glass case  
 in a tower  
 protected  
 by magic

### Peace Poem

In space no one can hear us argue.  
 Near neighbors don't pause cautiously,  
 flattening their ears to our shame.  
 In space, pettiness throws no shade  
 on the curving moon  
 and the chill stars care less.  
 But in a forest the leaves will shudder  
 when struck by harsh words.  
 The exuberance of growing things will halt  
 and stutter, retreating in the gust of hostile tones.  
 Let's go then into the water, where bodies are cursive  
 and barbs fail to pierce our dolphin skin.  
 Splinters escape our mouths in slow and muted bubbles.  
 We can take turns being the wave  
 and the floaty thing that dances.

### Rural Twilight

after Ashley Hunt's Degrees of Visibility

The landscape is fading  
 into winter night, all  
 brush and sticks,  
 glimmers and shadows.  
 Something gathers  
 the shades into a shape  
 the color of the deer,  
 disappearing there.  
 I'm both objectivist and vitalist,  
 sensing for the seen and the not seen,  
 and the not seen behind the seen.



I see the hills of dusky hatchmarks, gray  
 as statistics, tan as a uniform,  
 brown as bad plumbing,  
 and these tones blending  
 with the specters behind  
 the hills where the prison is  
 disappearing in the landscape.  
 Telepathy is feeling from afar.  
 From wherever I'm standing  
 something is disappearing.  
 Holding cover, the deer come  
 and go with shifting definition.  
 What I like about abolition  
 is the visionary linkage of  
 carceral violence to our knot  
 of problems, the whole thing.  
 What I like about abolition  
 is the light strung high,  
 illuminating the darkening landscape,  
 a light that stays on  
 and stays on.

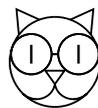
### **Economies will lie flat**

Today, it's nice down here  
 nice to be flat,  
 supine on pavement  
 where the mind wanders.  
 Watery breezes cross my mass  
 drawing arrows on a map.  
 An updraft lifts my ears:  
 wheels, wet feet, a weed in a crack.  
 The mood ring of my inner eye  
 glows red, but it's just  
 the sun trying to get in.  
 If I were homeless I would come  
 to the public pool in summer heat  
 to cool my blistered continent. Yet  
 I am not homeless. I come  
 to lay flat on wet concrete,  
 feeling, as we say, "in the moment" :  
 shibboleth of mental health.  
 The debt crisis is an ecological disaster.  
 Cheek to the slab, recumbent flesh,  
 prone to the future, our home.



## BIO

Claire Pentecost is an artist and writer nurtured by the living matters of the unified multi-dimensional being that animates the critical zone of our planet. Pentecost's work is driven by research and inspired by questions of form. With her partner Brian Holmes she runs the experimental cultural space Watershed Art & Ecology in Chicago.



Wild Papers editor: Ingo Niermann  
English copy-editing: Rosanna McLaughlin  
Illustration: Eva Fàbregas

Graphic design: Ana Domínguez Studio

© 2026, Claire Pentecost, Eva Fàbregas & Wild Publishing, a division  
of Institute Art Gender Nature at HGK Basel FHNW, Switzerland