

# The Poetry Porch: Introduction 2025

## Proximities

As submissions arrived for *The Poetry Porch 2025*, over the Internet, via email, and through the US mail, I was struck by the graphic content of some of the poems. First one poem and then another and then another engaged with bodily functions closely examined, until I sensed a continuity in the discomfort that I decided to work with rather than dismiss.

Ads that take aim at body shaming (Marge Piercy, “The selling of shame”), daubs of food on lips (Richard Fein, “Your Lips”), slime on a river and from a cow in labor (Gary Whited, “My Father, My Virgil”). These lines evoke the realities they describe and make compelling reading.

Piercy observes, “Our bodies disgust,” about the pressures that cosmetic companies lay on us to spend money on their products and mask our stink, a stink advertisers dare not name. Piercy, however, does name the body parts under scrutiny in a defiant assertion of her identity.

Richard Fein’s close observations of the woman across the table at dinner describes someone he thought he knew, until he considers her manner of consuming her food. “[H]ow you changed right before my eyes, transformed by asparagus, spaghetti, sauce suctioned into you. . . .” All this occurs at the proximity of two feet as her habits constitute a personhood he had never thought to question or explore.

In his narration about childhood on the prairie, Gary Whited also asks a question it seemed that neither he, nor anyone, had thought to ask. Prompted at first by the sheen of green algae on the river surface, the boy muses, “Is there, I wonder, a world/ without slime?” As he herds a cow with distended uterus to the barn where his father is waiting, his concerns seem more urgent. After a successful delivery, the father, his arm having been up to the shoulder inside the cow’s uterus, takes an explosion of natal fluids and excrement full in the face. Father and son stand on opposite sides of humor as they regard each other. Later the boy experiences his own face-washing, a concrete answer to his question, which ends the poem.

You will find poetry here that focuses on scraps of paper, things found and saved, reports on the news and the weather, meditations in the desert and at home. The more I read them, the more I delight in these verses, which illuminate experiences that we can observe from a distance, or that tangle us up in necessary intimacies that we cannot avoid, or that come at a time when we need to draw near.

Joyce Wilson  
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