

Poetry Porch Introduction

PROVISIONS

Many of the poems in *The Poetry Porch 2026* unfold like a memoir, with sketches of earlier times, childhood settings, characterizations of people who no longer exist. These narratives convey the attendant feelings of loss, fondness, gratitude, amazement, and are helped along with that great sustainer, humor. Richard Dey relates a novel's worth of romance in his poetic sequence from the point of view of a man who travels from Maine to Missouri (and back) to meet up with the former love-of-his-life. Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah reviews haunting episodes from his childhood in Nigeria, while Linda Arntzenius celebrates regional dimensions of her childhood in Scotland. With determination to focus on the present, Helen Heineman investigates the many dimensions of the word "stroke." Marge Piercy takes a clear-eyed look on definitions of death, the companionship of cats, and her husband's devotion.

Publishing a repertory of writers who have submitted regularly over the past twenty-nine years, I should have foreseen what was to come: chronicles of aging. Caring for relatives, the illnesses, hospital stays, jolts of absence occupy the verses here. How much we have to learn from them. Now that four contributors are in their nineties, their poems reflect on the delicious sense that these are our last days, and we want to get through them by living to the fullest. We want to observe clearly, experience fully, and greet the present with an embrace. These poems record how it is with us and how it is happening now.

Katherine Jackson's *Vitrine 5* (cover image) delights in the way it suggests an ironic future for fossil fuels. The glass case displays objects that look like oil-cans, with long narrow tapering spouts, once used to squirt "a little oil" to lubricate machine parts, now presented as pastel-colored objects of art. The size of each container implies reduced amounts of oil that have become ornaments, like perfume, with little resemblance to the petroleum we are dependent upon to heat our homes, power our automobiles, and fight wars over.

I am reminded of the title of the 1938 Capra film (from the Kaufman and Hart play), in which the grandfather explains to the young executive that he might make a profit selling residential homes to an expanding factory complex, but he will forfeit the neighborhood. Despite all the advantages he would gain in the business deal, the elder emphasizes, he might find that "You can't take it with you." Jackson's sculpture juxtaposes provisioning and portability, prompting the questions, Where are we going? What would we be taking?

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