

'LUSH AND KALEIDOSCOPIC'

Sam Levin, Los Angeles Review of Books

We are excited to announce the Distinguished Visiting Writer for Spring, Beth Piatote! We are looking forward to her reading from, *The Beadworkers* during our 'One Read Seminar' in June.

"This stunning debut collection marks the arrival of a brilliant storyteller; Beth Piatote weaves together political, historical, and personal themes to offer new perspectives on the human condition . . . Piatote, who is Nez Perce, writes with dazzling clarity, emotion, and bone-dry humor about the lives of indigenous people, in what feels like a celebration, an act of love, and one of the most unforgettable story collections of the year."

—Kristin Iversen, NYLON



Photo by Kirsten Lara Getchell

Beth Piatote is a scholar of Native American/Indigenous literature and law; a creative writer of fiction, poetry, plays, and essays; and an Indigenous language revitalization activist/healer, specializing in Nez Perce language and literature. She is the author of two books: *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature* (Yale 2013), which won an MLA award; and *The Beadworkers: Stories* (Counterpoint 2019), which was longlisted for the Aspen Words Literary Prize, the PEN/Bingham Prize for Debut Fiction, and shortlisted for the California Independent Booksellers Association "Golden Poppy" Award. Her current projects include a series of scholarly essays on Indigenous law through sensory representations of sound, vision, synaesthesia, and haunting in the long 20th century literary works; essays on Indigenous language revitalization; a novel, a poetry collection, and further development of her play, *Antikoni*, which was selected for the 2020 Festival of New Plays at the Autry. She has held several artist residencies and frequently teaches writing at Fishtrap: Writing and the West and other workshops. In 2021, she served as a judge for the PEN America/Robert J. Dau Short Story Prize.

"The Beadworkers is a feast of wit and storytelling. I read it once to see where Piatote would go next. Twice to savor the emotional, cultural, and structural resonance of this wonderful work." —Louise Erdrich, author of *The Night Watchman*

Beth is part of the core faculty group that created the Designated Emphasis in Indigenous Language Revitalization (est. in 2018) and currently serves as Chair of the DE. She earned her PhD in Modern Thought and Literature at Stanford University and joined the Berkeley faculty in 2007. In 2020, she joined the Comparative Literature department; she holds a dual appointment in Comparative Literature and Native American Studies. She is affiliated faculty in the Department of Linguistics; Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies; and American Studies. Beth is Nez Perce, enrolled with Colville Confederated Tribes. In addition to her research and teaching, she is involved in ongoing efforts to repatriate ancestors from museums as part of a larger movement of reparation and redress. She currently serves on the international Council of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her two children.

In this issue:

GRADUATE:
Richard Choate
PAGE 2-4

EVENTS: Oregon Book Awards
PAGE 4

FACULTY:
Lauren Seiffert
PAGE 5

BOOK REVIEW:
Elizabeth Higgins
PAGE 6

FORWARD:
Open calls
PAGE 7

WRITERS:
Jennifer Reimer
PAGE 8

It's what you learn, after you know it all, that counts.

My first experience of Richard Choate, our most recent graduate, goes back to last year during my first residency. Bobby Stephens and Richard were both commenting enthusiastically during a class. I was smiling from ear to ear, as I was reminded of Statler and Waldorf from *The Muppets*. I wanted to know these two! As time progressed, I imagined how lovely it would be to have Richard as a neighbor. He seemed the type of person you could go have morning coffee with, then buoyed, get on with your day. Having interviewed him in-depth this past week, I can honestly say that he is an animated delight, full of humorous musings, and interesting experiences.

According to Richard, as

about it!" He was a teen when his father died, so his mother raised him and his sisters on her own in Washington, Iowa.

From what I've gathered, Richard's life reads like a road map, and he's convinced that his resume reads like a ransom note. Both ring true. He graduated with a degree in Journalism from Drake University and then worked at the newspaper, *Des Moines Register*, starting at the city desk. At the time the newspaper was one of the top ten in the country, and only the *New York Times* had more Pulitzer-prize winning journalists. He made his way through various departments at the paper, with banner moments like the headline: "Marines beat off Viet Cong," working in the despised position

long enough to become Director of Executive Recruiting. This was all made possible in part, by sizable servings of alcohol throughout his twenties and thirties. His quick ascent up the corporate ladder, according to Richard, was also because he was "*such a remarkable individual who had an innate ability to weave a tapestry of bullshit.*"

After fully embracing debauchery and living the tortured artist lifestyle, he found his way to rehab in Arizona in 1986. At this point it is safe to declare that Richard is a unicorn, because he spent one month in rehab and never returned. Richard has been sober thirty-five years, no relapse. After working in a communication consulting firm, then a malpractice insurance company giving lectures on how not to get sued, he decided to work in the field that saved him. Richard returned to school, was certified in Drug and Alcohol counseling and has worked in Treatment Centers for the past twenty years. Currently, he's a clinical supervisor at Hazelton Graduate School of Addiction Studies and teaches at Metropolitan State University. With his seventieth birthday just around the corner, he's not slowing down anytime.

When I ask him to tell me some of the highlights of his life, he says there isn't enough time. He does, however, tell me that in '79 he auditioned for SNL alongside an unknown Eddie Murphy, and was called back twice. He didn't get it, because he figured at twenty-six, with his brain fully developed, they weren't looking for people with insight. *I'd be dead now, the way of Chris Farley,*" he says matter of factly, "*I think of those years, the drinking, all the behaviors, the lying, the stealing. I didn't have relationships, I took hostages!*"



a child he learned comedy from watching television. "*I believed that the people I was watching at night were watching me during the day. So in front of the solarium with the curtains to the living room, I would put on shows.*" By middle school, the teachers believed that something was seriously wrong with him. He was deemed disruptive. His father freaked out, but his mother said the whole thing was bullshit and, "*If you couldn't put zinc oxide on the problem, forget*

of 'Question of the Day,' collecting a wealth of stories covering the Police beat, and finally working in sales bringing the Spiderman series into syndication.

After he left the paper, he wandered through several summers working in Theater. He participated in theater festivals and playwright workshops, writing, and acting. Eventually, he ended up as a Christmas salesclerk in small electrical appliances at Marshall Fields and stuck around there

The word I'd attach to my drinking life is TACKY. If I were famous, I would have been canceled. I went to treatment and never drank again. Now thirty-five years later, why did I get it and not anyone else. Why did I make it? I don't know. If I don't go to meetings I start acting like an asshole. My behaviors, they drift. I call it the drift...my shitty personality comes out sideways, character defects come out. When I go to meetings, they get pushed back in. I haven't heard anything new in meetings in over twenty years. I don't know why it works. I go and I feel better, centered. Like seeing a chiropractor, an adjustment, why does it work...I don't know...I just feel better."

Then I ask him to tell me of a feeling or experience that was unlike any other and he tells me of "Scapino," a play he toured with for a few years, that required audience response and interaction. "It was always a little different every night. There is nothing in the world like knowing that you have the audience right where you want them and that you literally have control. There's no other feeling like that. It's in the moment. Now, I wish I'd done that sober, but it is what it is." Agreed.

Richard admits he's had many life experiences that make it easy to generate stories, but this certainly doesn't mean that writing is not hard work. When asked to describe his writing practice, he rolls his eyes and tells me he is not one of those writers who go on about having a special place, time, feeling or whatever! He follows Mark Twain's advice: "Write, write, write." Naturally, Richard's recovery lifestyle factors into his writing practice. "Write everyday. You write 600 words a day, it won't be long before you have a book. Don't worry about the quality of the work, just write. Nothing is good the first time. Get words on a page. Write. Just know that you have to do it. And don't take a break. Taking a break is death, you'll be face down." Plain and simple. His recovery does inform everything.

When he went to AA, they gave him a road map for his life, for living one day at a time. The philosophical understanding of recovery comes into play in the development of his characters, how the characters' view people. Often his written dialogues are born out of recovery talk, and his character's experiences are gleaned from actual stories he covered on the police beat during his time at the newspaper. Richard believes that 'one day at a time' gets people focused. I'd have to agree because it's much easier to commit a day than a lifetime.

When speaking about the process of writing,



Richard speaks candidly, "The only place you can live is where your feet are. Revision is what I struggle with, cutting off arms and legs. The work is in the revision. It's easy to tell the story first, getting it down. I don't have sympathy for people who say they can't." I find myself wondering how he makes it look so easy. I ask him his life motto and he tells me with a smile, he discovered it writing his thesis, which he defended on March 1st, "It's what you learn after you know it all, that counts. You can't ever be done. There's always more to learn. I didn't have a clear definitive reason why I couldn't write a book, so I signed up for the MFA. It didn't take long for me to recognize the important stuff required to be a writer. And I realized that I had most of it already. There are people struggling with dialogue, structure, plot, character, setting. I struggled with point of view and the arc of the story...I didn't know Noah was in this! (cymbal crash). Anyway, when I got done with the thesis reading on Tuesday, I felt like a writer. Something about the event made me feel like a writer. The warmth of being a writer, rather than the struggle, you know, it was nice. I will never self-publish. Get all my friends to buy my book, Fuck that. I don't have that many friends."

He's lived a colorful life and struggled through relationships, personal hardships and basic life obstacles, and from an outsiders' perspective, he has me believing that it's simple, just one foot after the other. I'm not sure I'm convinced, and then I realize what I recognize in him is what I deeply respect in my father, his implicit manner towards life. It just is.

-Interviewed by Imke Wernicke

Here follows an excerpt from Richard's manuscript entitled: *Wide Spot in the Road.*

It was at this moment he heard a loud, gravelly voice shouting from about three storefronts away. Yale winced at the sound. It was the voice of Carl Marks, Mayor of Winston.

"Sheriff?" Carl stated with his characteristic oratorical style. "Am I hearing correctly that we have a missing child in our community?"

"From our community," Yale corrected, "Yes."

"And I have to hear about it from gabby citizens on the street? Why didn't you let me know?"

"Carl, I apologize. I should have let you know. But as I don't report to you, it just got away from me. Burt Neeley knew. I don't know why he didn't inform you."

“Cuz he’s a knothed, that’s why. What’s the progress?”

“Today is the second day of searching. We still aren’t sure if she’s missing or a runaway. When something like this happens, it gets turned over to State Police and IBI until they decide there’s more to pursue or turn it back over to me.”

Lowell tapped lightly on the Sheriff’s door. “Excuse me, Sheriff. Are you busy?”

“As a matter of fact, I am, Lowell. What’s a sixteen-letter word for ‘insinuation’?”

“I... I’m afraid I wouldn’t know. I have the information you wanted about the old button factory.”

“Excellent. What do you know?”

“Well, quite a lot in one way, and not so much in the other.”

“Intriguing. It sounds like Lewis Carroll.”

“Who?” asked Lowell.

“Show me what you’ve got,” said Yale, ignoring Lowell’s innocent question.

written by Richard Choate

LITERARY EVENTS | AUTHOR, THESIS, ESSAY

calling all writers

This newsletter is for you, the grad student, alumni, faculty of the writing program. We're changing things up! No more themes, just open call! Please send something to be published in the newsletter. You'll be glad you did.

GUIDELINES: Student, faculty, and alumni original works are welcome.
Please share your thoughts, work, unfinished or not.
Prose: 500 words max (excerpts from larger works welcome)
Poetry: No more than two poems.

PLEASE Share your offering by **April 5, 2022**, by emailing it to: wernicki@oregonstate.edu

2022 OREGON BOOK AWARD FINALISTS STAFFORD/HALL AWARD FOR POETRY

The finalists for the Oregon Book Award were listed March 7th, and one of our own,

Irene Cooper,

made the list of Finalists. Her book, *spare change*, published by Finishing Line Press is up for the Stafford/Hall Award for Poetry, along with four other finalists.

For more details on the Book Awards go to www.literary-arts.org

OREGON BOOK AWARDS FINALISTS READING: FICTION AND POETRY

Wed, April 20 from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm PDT
Literary Arts
925 SW Washington street Portlad Or 97205
FOR TICKETS/INFO [ARTS](#)

All other readings by finalists for the Oregon Book Awards in General Nonfiction, Graphic Literature, Children's literature, Young Adult Literature are presented in a series of webinars beginning March 15th and finishing April 25th at the Oregon Book Award Ceremony.

For all the details or to register for these free events go to [Literary Arts Events](#)

This month I asked our Program Manager to share some of her personality. You know her and love her! She's LAUREN SEIFFERT!! Also she's an esteemed colleague. :)

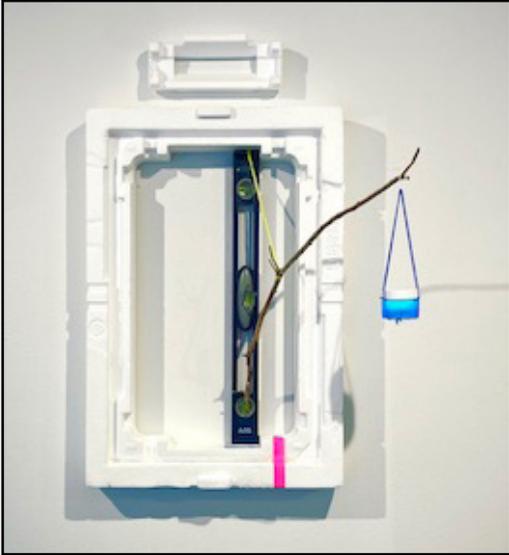


Share something about yourself you want us to know.

Here is a fun fact: my art career began at four with a coloring contest. I won a DQ Blizzard!

You are a creative individual. Tell us about the artistic medium(s) in which you like to work?

I work in-between sculpture and site-specific installation. I combine mundane found objects, like things from my home or my recycling bin, with original pieces made of everyday materials. My aesthetic evolved from being an utterly broke grad student. I started using bricolage, which is the practice of only using only the materials around you (3-D collage). I was the studio scavenger, looking in the trash, asking people to save their six-pack rings, or using materials that cost almost nothing—now, having the constraint of sticking to a minimal budget is part of my practice. My studio mates still leave "cool" garbage on my table.



Consider your creative process in working with sculpture. What can you tell us about your process that might help us in our writing process?

One of my painting professors would come by and paint a massive red "X" in the middle of your canvas if you were stuck or too precious with a piece. He'd tell you to continue from there because perfection is impossible and boring. I still do this to myself when I'm stuck. Kill your darlings, but keep them stashed nearby. Sometimes they'll work later.

Which artist, or creative individual would you like to have dinner with and why?

I'd pick David Altmejd. His work is weird enough that I think he'd be interesting to talk to, and we could geek out on all of the materials and different goops we use.

Do you have a favorite children's book? Why is it your favorite? Was there a lesson it taught you?

I have three young nibblings, and we read together often. Our favorites are *Pugtato Finds a Thing* and *My Shadow is Pink*. Both rhyme, have excellent illustrations and have themes of embracing your gifts, self-acceptance, and compassion.

My Shadow is Pink is also about gender identity and gender roles. I'm not sure they taught me anything new, but I love seeing the nibblings apply what they've learned. And we call each other "best spuddies," which is a line from *Pugtato*.

Is there a book you like to gift people? Books are my favorite gift to give!

Non-Fiction: *Draw Your Weapons* – Sarah Sentilles

Art book: *Unmonumental*

Art theory: *The Artist's Joke* – White Chapel

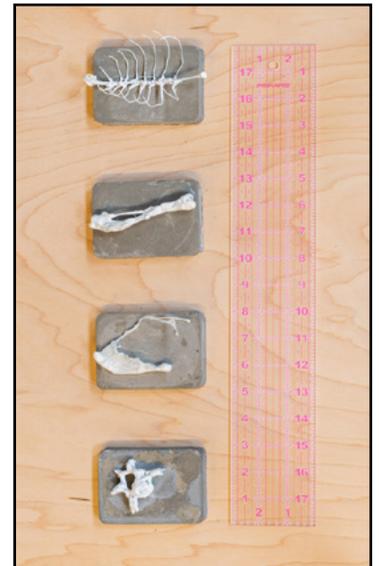
Cocktail: *PDT Bar Book* or *The Drunken Botanist* - I think cocktail books make fun gifts. I used to create cocktails and curate bar menus and these were my favorites.

Share the most important thing for a grad student to do or remember when completing an MFA in this program. An MFA in general?

My favorite and most repeated advice from my mentor was: "You're always already interviewing." At first, it sounded super cheesy and corporate. But it's true. The people you meet in school are often the ones who you'll reach out to for references, for feedback, and who will bring you along on new opportunities. I think it applies in many situations. Readings and Thesis defenses can be intimidating when presenting your work. Remember that you're the top expert on your writing.

If you could go somewhere for a week, no budget, where would you go? Would that place change if it was a month? If so, where would that be?

I have a super long list of places I'd like to visit. If there weren't a pandemic and an active invasion, I'd go to Europe for the summer. Both the Venice Biennale and Documenta are happening this year. The Biennale, of course, is every two years, and Documenta is every five, so it's like the stars aligning when they're in the same year. Otherwise, the next place I plan to visit is Iceland.



Left middle: "Show me your survival pack, book me a survival course and call me Patagonia" by the artist. Bottom right: "You have to Eviscerate the Beast from Within" (detail) Photo by Mario Gallucci Studios, courtesy of Sator Projects. Interviewed by Imke Wernicke

The Age of Phillis

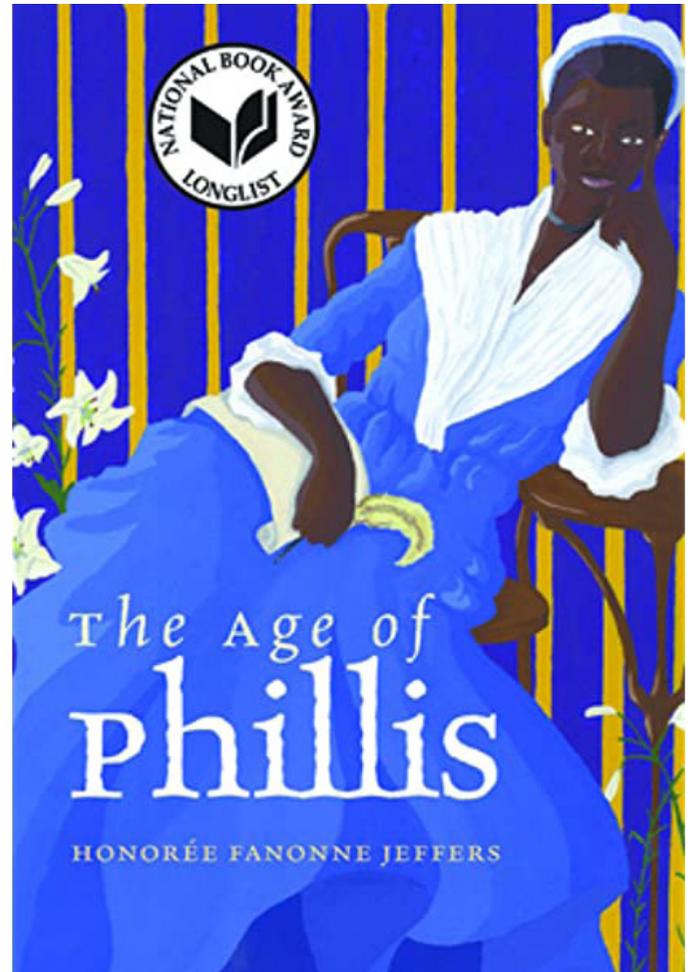
By Honorée Fanonne Jeffers

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers spent fifteen years meticulously researching the life of Phillis Wheatley, eighteenth century poet, slave, and the first African American to have a book of poetry published—in London in 1773. Jeffers crafted this research into poems, and assembled the poems to form a story of Phillis Wheatley's life that takes the reader beyond the recorded second and third-hand accounts, and dares to imagine the truth.

The craft Jeffers uses to accomplish this feat is skillful and varied. The poems take modern forms, speak from multiple perspectives within and beyond Phillis's circle, painting her life and the broader circumstances of the time in which she lived. Poems often appear as lost letters exchanged between Wheatley and others. Jeffers uses strategies that allow the telling of a more intimate or verboten story than what would have been safe to put down in a letter, such as brackets and italics containing unwritten thoughts, or an imagined first draft of an extant letter, revealing truths that Phillis Wheatley and others may have thought better of sharing. Occasionally, Jeffers breaks the fourth wall to interject within the poems and explain uncertainties in the history, sometimes addressing the reader directly, and in the process, cultivates an understanding for the reader of what an incredible endeavor this book must have been to write.

Jeffers navigates the deep contradictions of Phillis Wheatley's circumstances with care and curiosity. The author explores what the Wheatley family might have meant to Phillis—the only family she had known since her capture from West Africa around the age of seven—a family who educated her and encouraged her to write but ultimately existed in her life only because they bought her and owned her. Jeffers imagines Phillis's life before her capture, a history erased, as well as her later life as a freed slave, and her marriage to John Peters, questioning flimsy assumptions born out of racist accounts still unquestioned by historians.

Jeffers manages to leave room for the many unknowable parts of Phillis Wheatley's life, while still



offering a story filled with imagery, as visceral and specific as any book of poetry should be. The balm Jeffers offers in telling this painful story appears in the form of a portrait that recognizes and celebrates Phillis Wheatley's brilliance, and makes immense and satisfying efforts to tease out the rich details of her life. This book should inspire us to continue to find new ways to push against the limits of the archive, to tell mishandled and erased histories more humanely, more justly, and more beautifully.

Send me your book review, and I'll include it in the next newsletter. Not only do we appreciate your participation but it looks great on your CV.

Email Imke at: wernicki@oregonstate.edu

FORWARD - OPEN CALLS

In the Tempered Dark: Contemporary Poets Transcending Elegy

examines the relationship between the body in grief and the body of the poem. This collection brings together work that conveys the range of grief that feels urgent to twenty-first century, living poets from diverse backgrounds, at different stages in their careers, confronting assorted losses through various styles and forms. By pairing contemporary poems with micro-essays, wherein each poet considers the connection between their included poetry and their corresponding grief, In the Tempered Dark initiates a dialogue designed to engage teachers, students, readers, and writers.



[Call for Submissions](#)

Black Lawrence Press is now accepting submissions for a new anthology of grief poems + micro-essays. Poets living in the United States and abroad are invited to submit.

Poets should send 1-3 grief poems and one micro-essay (~500 words) that considers (creatively or critically) the relationship between their body of grief and the body of their submitted poems. Poets may send multiple submissions. Each submission should be accompanied by one micro-essay that addresses the submitted poem(s). We are not able to consider submissions that do not include the requisite micro-essay.

NOTE: Grief and loss may be interpreted broadly; poets should not feel beholden to work that explores only death, though traditional elegies are also welcome.

Previously published poems are welcome, though micro-essays should be generated with consideration for the specific interests of this call for submissions.

Submissions will be accepted February 1, 2022 – May 31, 2022.

.....



The 2022 Hudson Prize

[The Hudson Prize is now open for submissions!](#)

Each year Black Lawrence Press will award The Hudson Prize for an unpublished collection of poems or short stories. The prize is open to new, emerging, and established writers. The winner of this contest will receive book publication, a \$1,000 cash award, and ten copies of the book. Prizes are awarded on publication.

The annual deadline is March 31.



Manuscripts containing individual stories or poems that have been previously published online or in print are absolutely eligible—please simply note previously published work on an acknowledgments page. On the other hand, if your manuscript has been previously published as a collection (including publication with a press, self-publication, online/digital publication, and publication in a small, limited-edition print run), then the manuscript is not eligible.

WORDSMITHERY - LONGING

Dr. Jennifer Reimer has a poetry book, *Keşke*, out in September, published by Airlie Press. Jennifer explains *keşke* (*kesh-kay*) roughly translates to "if only", and expresses a wish or longing. She has recently had several poems from this upcoming collection published online at [Mediterranean Poetry](#).

We thought we'd share one here...

And should you be in the mood for more *keşke*, you can read other poems from the book on these sites:

[New Delta Review](#)

[Omniverse by Omnidaw Publishing](#)

[The Drowning Gull](#)

[Sliver of Stone Magazine](#)

[Inverted Syntax](#)

[The Coil](#)

Keşke XIX.

—she— joins
Mediterranean to Aegean
in Demre where the huntress
wild and tame Artemis
refuses *Lycian*
marriage : river to
sea silt covered *alliance*
Myra worships
Roman *Diana's*
templed shadows : *wilderness virginity childbirth*
beneath *moon hunt*
high cliffs
carved rock *belief :*
tombs *the dead*
resemble treasure *transported*
chests X marked *by a wing—*
like pirates map
fabled *like creature*
St Nicholas his arrival
steals —her—
star
nights sky : Orion's bow
bends sailors from Bari
—her— heart seize saint's
forgotten relics
Myra in 1087
heaps of *Murex* shells purple dyed
Andriake harbor at dusk
—she— *Artemis*
flies *acted out in anger*
from his boat *whenever*
arrows *her wishes—*
seas *disobeyed* *keşke—*
surfaces—

Poetry in this post: © Jennifer A. Reimer

Published with the permission of Jennifer A. Reimer

