

**ARTIST**     Ann Tobias Karson

It's as if I painted it. One minute imagined,  
or remembered, inside my head. Then  
all it takes is looking through the window:  
There it is, alive and real, outside me.

It feels as if that maple tree is my design.  
Naturally, it is there: matching my intent,  
watching over shrubs and smaller trees.  
Daffodils below are splashes of yellow.

Nearby, nandina leaves glow red and green.  
Grey early morning haziness: dew modifies  
the rich green of the grass. Soft clouds,  
grey-white, move gently in azure sky.

Houses beyond the ridge form a frame.  
for the picture; then disappear from view,  
my eye focused forward on the plants.  
Dab of color needed here. Or there.

I can almost feel the paintbrush,  
blue, yellow, or green paint dripping  
from it to the outdoor canvas. But  
I have merely pulled the blind.

**Ann Karson** grew up in South Africa, then moved to England, then Minnesota and Connecticut before retiring to Asheville in 1992. At OLLI, she has been participant in various ways, and is an enthusiastic member of the Poetry Lovers SIGs.

About this poem, Ann remarks, "Having taken part in an event or two with OLLI artists, this one seemed a natural (pun definitely intended!)"

## **DURING THIS STORM**

Jim Carillon

After last night's storm  
Fog hugs the valley,  
Clouds still heavy above,  
The sun strains to appear.

Over and over these days  
I find myself retreating to  
Paul Simon's "Kathy's Song,"  
Striving to relive a simpler time.

A time long before the current crisis,  
Even before the regular strains of  
Contemporary life prior to this madness,  
When looking forward was once possible.

All my usual tricks are useless now.  
Social distance is killing me slowly,  
My reason for being challenged again,  
"Writing songs I can't believe."

I have learned life goes on without me,  
The air itself now clearer for some.  
Poet friends expressing this crisis better,  
Making good use of this forced pause.

Yet for me the storm continues,  
Finding no shelter from wind or rain --  
"I stand alone without beliefs,"  
Without hope for the sun again.

**Jim Carillon** has been a member with OLLI for a few years. He currently facilitates one of our Poetry Lovers SIGs. He belongs to 3 local poetry groups and is working on his first collection of poems now with Pisgah Press.

Asked why he selected to share this poem with us, Jim responded, "Some days during the pandemic are fine, uplifting even. This poem describes one of those other days."

## TEN OBSERVATIONS

Dave Castel

The true god is abstract within the laws of nature's causality.  
There is one reality, which exists in the natural universe of stunning logic.  
This god creates beauty through divine creation and not legend.  
There is but one life to be lived and creation defines and guides it.  
My free will is a gift that leaves me awed by its possibilities.

A bleak existence is always replaced by joyful human perceptions.  
Natural perfection surrounds and relentlessly teases us.  
To understand and accept life's reality is the highest human fulfillment.  
Godliness is within the minds of the liberated explorers of the universe.  
My simple understanding of this natural world is wisdom's great hope.

**David Castel** has been happily retired for eighteen years and he thinks turning eighty is a real-life benchmark.

As this poem suggests, Dave wrote it to share his simple understanding of this natural world.

## **A HOMECOMING**

Lottie Erikson

From monochrome deserts  
and the alien reek  
of burning,  
Burning cow dung,  
burning metal and sulfur  
that bite like shards  
of glass in the mouth,  
We come back to the waters  
and fragrance  
of our native land.  
To the deep greens,  
to the vibrating deep green  
tang of pine forests  
and to the river  
we remember.

The river reads us  
like a gypsy palmist  
and we let it take us,  
floating backwards.  
Past abandoned cotton mills  
and graffiti forests  
where junkies under  
railroad trestles  
measure the distance  
between their need  
and our plenty.

Past stretches  
where robber barons  
own the blue hills,  
the landscaped banks,  
even the mists  
that rise  
like a fragile bridge  
between worlds.

Past low thickets  
and tall trees beclowned  
with kudzu,  
along slow meanders  
where our bare toes  
trail broken strands  
of light.  
In late noon the river takes us  
to a shallow side-stream  
whose waters slip over

and around boulders  
like runs of clean cool vowels.  
Here we read  
our welcome  
in each flat-washed  
stone.

**Lottie Erikson** attended Tulane University and majored in English Literature. After retiring from work in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2016, she moved to Asheville and rediscovered her first love – poetry -- through the classes and special interest groups offered at OLLI.

This poem is another testimony to Lottie's devotion to writing about the wonder inherent in day-to-day observations.