

Commentary on the work:

Writers often say that it takes years to process an event or experience before it becomes a poem, and that certainly has been the case with my own writing practice. I might begin a poem shortly after an event, but it is often not 'finished' for a number of years. At least that has certainly occurred when it comes to a poem feeling 'done' and then subsequently being accepted and published. My two poems published in this issue are no exception.

My poem, "Stairwell Into The Drum of The Earth" is based on the true story of meeting my current partner and father of my children at a well known and long-standing reggae night in Indianapolis. I began writing this poem at least 10 years ago; however, for a long time it wasn't coming together and didn't feel right. It's extremely difficult to write a love poem, let alone a poem that deals with cultural differences and tumult in the early stages of a relationship. I have tried to show sensitivity to my partner's culture (he is Jamaican). Because of my positionality of being White and American, I have to be very careful if writing about our cultures in relation to each other. Some of those things are mentioned here, so it took a long time to find the right balance; I wanted to honor his culture and explain how I had a great appreciation of it and the reggae night that I had become so fond of attending before I even met him.

I had put the poem aside for a number of years, and then last year, a writing prompt triggered my memory of the poem and it flooded back to me; this time the issues in it felt solved. I also made sure to share the poem with my partner and get his approval. He is not a big poetry person, but he actually liked this poem, so I felt very proud!

As for my other piece, "The Psychic Medium Saw Lots of Horses," this also references a true story that occurred a number of years ago. My mother and I talked to a psychic medium who was channeling my grandpa (her father). At least I believe he was; she's not so sure! Anyhow, this poem is honoring my grandpa's memory. He was a Polish immigrant who settled in South Bend. He came over as a child with his mother, and he encountered many struggles until his adulthood. These included working from a very young age, poverty, 'riding the rails' as a teenager in the US and subsequently joining the CCC's. Besides all that, he was a kind, funny, smart, and lovely human being. This poem is a bit of a tribute to him. In fact, it's funny that these two pieces got accepted as a pair because I often say that my grandpa and my partner share a lot of the same qualities.