



THIS ASSEMBLY

K WEBER

165

**THIS ASSEMBLY**

*by*

**K WEBER**

*featuring*

**165 FRIENDS**

## INTRO

I joke that the only way I could have done any sort of new chapbook project in 2019 was to get at least 150 people to contribute. In reality, it was 165! All joking aside, this has been one sincerely grand opportunity that just sort of happened after over a year of periodically writing poems that included words supplied by others. Through Twitter, Instagram, messaging apps, and email I would occasionally request that people donate words that I could use in a poem. Friends, family and even total strangers would join in and on some occasions, I would get a very large response! I was getting more comments on how much others enjoyed helping me in the creation of new work and often I would be told that individuals were trying out their own donated word poems or giving prompts a chance.

My crafting of these collaborative poems began in April of 2018. I was taking part in both the Poem-A-Day (PAD) Challenge at *Writer's Digest* and the daily NaPoWriMo writings and wanted to add a twist to the existing prompts I was following. I find sometimes that social media, as loud as it is, often makes me feel even more isolated than I probably already am! I don't know how that is possible, but it is my experience. On the buzz of writing new poems, I figured why not try reaching out to others beyond the typical small talk or political nagging that can sometimes make things uncomfortable online and work together on some poetry! That first poem in which 5 people submitted words for me to use, about begonias, is still a favorite. I really wanted to do more of these. At most I believe I wrote one poem incorporating 20-30 words. Having tried some other forms of language and word-playing poems (I have taken apart entire poems of mine and reorganized every letter and rearranged to make a new poem... more than once or twice...), I found these donated words poems to be unique and rewarding but not as exhausting as some of the other experiments I have attempted with my writing.

Inspired by all the encouragement and satisfaction of folks who participated in my poems of the donated-word variety, I decided to embark on a larger-scale book project. I mainly just knew I

wanted to do around 20 poems or something sort of resembling chapbook-length although my intent all along was to continue the format of my previous 4 books that I published in online PDF and audiobook formats for free. I aimed for 150 people to donate words I could use across those 20 poems. Things very soon got weird and fun and I'd say pretty original.

I settled on 21 new poems to write. For about 2-3 weeks starting in August 2019 I asked people I've known since birth, a long time, a little while, or who just saw my call for word donations to send me a word each. I surpassed my original goal of 150 people and landed at 160. I gave every word a number and when they were all collected, I used a randomizing tool online to put the words in random order. By process of best guessing, and possibly rolling dice, I selected how many words would be in each poem and also the poem into which each word would land.

I began working on the 21 original poems little by little. Having left the words to chance, I had no choice but to use the words in the poems they were assigned. It's funny now, in retrospect, seeing how words that were initially daunting – that I could barely pronounce and/or had no idea what their meanings were – are very dear to me.

The task of using words given to me by others was keeping me busy but I had a few ideas to add another layer or 2 or 3. I had people send me a link to a song they enjoyed. I got 20 responses to this. I put the numbers 1-20 in a tote bag, shook it up and then drew one of the numbers. I then went back to the randomizing tool to choose which of the 21 poems that song would be inspire. "Hang in There" is the poem that eventually included the winning song. PS: If you know me well, you know I made a playlist of all the songs that were suggested:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHocQg9A1HY5EVs\\_Wm1moqaN-l22Ct2B8](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHocQg9A1HY5EVs_Wm1moqaN-l22Ct2B8)

One day while watching "The Great British Baking Show" I wrote down 5 words that I heard and added them to the poem that is now "In Retrograde." You will also see a bonus section that was

originally going to contain one poem that recruited the help of a few of the original 160 word donors in a poem that relies on a theme, a title and several lines that were all suggested by others. This was absolutely the toughest poem to complete! But why stop there? I added another supplementary section that includes 5 poems written by 5 people that all feature the same 5 donated words. And since I didn't want to miss out on the fun of being the word donor, there is a final poem where one person wrote a poem using 5 words I gave them! I am ecstatic over the poems resulting from these additional poems that have a bit more heavy-lifting done by others! The poems written by others also have another bonus!!! Most all of the writers read their poem aloud in the audiobook version! Some even noted this was their first time ever recording their poetry! What a huge compliment to have so many people go along with me on this journey!

There was a poll somewhere in the midst of all of this where anyone could vote on the color palette for the cover art and interior design. 8 potential color schemes were provided and in the end there was one that claimed much of the final vote. The artist I worked with was able to create art that embodied different aspects of the word "assembly" that are reflected again and again in this project AND the art adhered to the winning colors!

New to me (as I do most of my book projects all by myself from beginning to end) was having a few people review these poems. I wanted to make sure that the poems stood on their own and were not just novelty or forced when it came to including the donated words and other donated and teamwork aspects of this book. I managed to have 12 people review the poems I wrote! This was astounding as it allowed each poem to be read by no fewer than 3 people! This was such a positive experience and no 2 reviewers had the same editorial or workshop experience. So much variety in the suggestions I received. I took the leap and revised some poems quite a bit thanks to the nudge of these readers! In return for the generosity of time and engagement from these readers (and the writers who contributed an original poem), I offered to review their work and have already had a

chance to provide comments on poems and manuscripts from this pool of talented and inspiring friends!

For a while this project was just known as "#kweberandherproject" until I found the absolute most fitting title. The cover art is based on a local factory in town that was once a major auto plant. It sits silent, enormous and nearly vacant but a sign including the word "assembly" still remains.

The word "assembly" encompasses so much that relates to this project but, in short: this has been an assembly of people assembling poems. We have created an end product together that started from some little ideas then graduated to this collection of poems. I tried my best to make these poems sound like poems I write. Some of these words were not easy to fit inside my voice! But like I said initially, I had so many people partaking in this project that the momentum of every email, spark of enthusiasm, and curiosity about this incredible undertaking pushed this collection through to the final version you get to jump into now!

After the original 21 poems, and then the addition of bonus poems and including reviewers to look over my creations, the total number of people who played a part in assisting me with this overall effort is 165! So, count me in and it's 166! I have never done anything like this and for this to have been such a satisfying endeavor the whole way through is pretty big deal kinda stuff (sorry, I am slowly returning to my regular vocabulary now!).

As noted previously, there is an audiobook version of THIS ASSEMBLY! At the end of this compilation is my bio and a page of helpful links and information about some of my other projects.

Enjoy this wild, magical collaboration!

K W E B E R

## LASTING

That kiss, a catalyst, was not  
coerced: tongue abrupt with restless  
jut like a tail locked between legs. Lips pulsed  
then lessened in their affection. Stretched out on linoleum,  
dreams and sighs held the magnitude of rouge and ruse. The  
body after shocks rose as a revenant. So much adoration  
to be hated; a paradox existing as knees  
reverberated laughter awkwardly  
to acquiesce.

BLAKE AMBROSE

*catalyst*

JOE LISTON

*coerced*

ANNE WALTERS

*tail*

JULIE ELDER

*affection*

KYLA HOUBOLT

*linoleum*

ASHLEY ELIZABETH

*magnitude*

JANICE LEAGRA

*ruse*

MEAGAN LUCAS

*revenant*

SARAH O'BRIEN

*paradox*

TOM SNARSKY

*acquiesce*

## STAGES

Mother Nature's a heckler  
and there is no laughter just yet  
but much lively duende  
from the tap-toed waiting crowd.

We crave being stunned and feeling  
our bodies enervate. We crave  
rain, not just the intrigue of virga misting  
the undercarriage of a cloud.

A gradual sun, a deliberate snow, all  
span an hour on some longitudes.  
Sometimes our emotions dart  
around in the afternoon, ticklish.

Mother Nature thunderclaps slowly  
as the show goes forging onward  
and the drink minimum  
is a clumsy downpour.

The comedian goes on in full blather  
beneath hot lights, frozen, as if the audience  
dug him a hole and held him there  
with ballast until the joke was funny.

There is nowhere to go. No shelter  
from boredom or earthquake. We  
slumbered through the act  
wishing the roles were recast.

JEFF WEBER	<i>heckler</i>
MARISA SILVA-DUNBAR	<i>duende</i>
MICHAEL METIVIER	<i>virga</i>
JENN R-J	<i>gradual</i>
LAURA TARASOFF	<i>forging</i>
RICHARD TINES	<i>blather</i>
CHRISTINA XIONG	<i>ballast</i>
TODD SMITH	<i>nowhere</i>
ELIZABETH DITTY	<i>slumbered</i>
AMY POAGUE	<i>recast</i>

## WHAT SETTLE MEANT

I want to go home, but I am home.  
My immediate empty stomach  
fills with *hiraeth*; the place where we  
played whole-family hide and seek;  
where someone shot my yellow ball,  
and I loved my little room with *Peanuts*  
wallpaper. Gone. The water  
tower's shadow now cools the empty  
lot. I once found a diamond on the staircase,  
a piece of glass or chip of crystal. That sliver  
gave me *déjà vu* that felt like 5 years old  
at 32, the actual distance felt right  
beside or inside of me. So close  
then to my family. We hovered  
over this city in sweeping *murmuration*  
or ridiculous *malarkey*.

We followed each other into the best  
and worst choices well before I was old  
enough to think further ahead of myself.  
I enjoyed sleeping in a sheeted fort  
between gnarled trees and remember  
a dead cat's burial ground and never going  
in the basement. Every word they said  
back then now sounds like *gibberish* but I am  
delighted and was loved. The transcendent,  
resplendent scenarios of before or hindsight  
were sometimes revealed to be wholly  
pure *transgression*. Today I count the numbers  
of them gone and I know which one tricked  
and bribed and flashed the *psychopomp*  
before they reached the end.

JULIETTE SEBOCK	<i>hiraeth</i>
TIANNA G. HANSEN	<i>crystal</i>
AGATHE LEMEUNIER	<i>déjà vu</i>
KILEY LEE	<i>distance</i>
ELIOT NORTH	<i>murmuration</i>
ANGELA KIRKPATRICK	<i>malarkey</i>
KAREN BUTAK	<i>gnarled</i>
CASI LOMBARDO	<i>gibberish</i>
MEGHA SOOD	<i>transgression</i>
ZACH J. PAYNE	<i>psychopomp</i>

## INVENTORY

The same sham I love  
because it's illusory: we could  
be cinnamon-tinged or in our  
finest colic. Were we truly  
candescent or were we burned  
down to the last gasp early?  
Your body never bronze but I  
was not vibrant.

We carried our worn beige  
souls around; made-up  
to look like fireworks  
and syncopation. There  
was an allure to being more  
than one person in a band  
of arms entwined, chained  
in solidarity.

L MARI HARRIS	<i>love</i>
GINGER SHOEMAKER	<i>illusory</i>
KIM MANNIX	<i>cinnamon</i>
EMILY COSTA	<i>colic</i>
j. sleet	<i>candescent</i>
LEAH CALLEN	<i>bronze</i>
SARA MATSON	<i>vibrant</i>
GREG LAWHUN	<i>syncopation</i>
JESS THAYIL	<i>allure (noun)</i>
K DULAI	<i>band</i>



## END OF MAY

There was no time  
for the cellar  
as wind went dripping  
like washed knives.

The chimera  
of safety  
howled, train-like,  
when nothing was safe.

Benighted, after the glow  
of a good dinner, day-  
light fell into dark  
plumage, dead weight.

Trees whittled to sharp  
pencils: shavings  
drawn down as curtains  
before the sideways shower.

To reify that night  
in story involves how  
buildings lost  
their topmost stories.

Neighbors had their sleep  
stolen maybe for weeks.  
The fissure opened lines  
of devastated communication.

NATHAN LIND

*cellar*

C.R. SMITH

*dripping*

SARAH RICHARDS

*chimera*

DOUGLAS MENAGH

*benighted*

CARA WATERFALL

*plumage*

ELISABETH HORAN

*reify*

MILLIE HUDSON

*maybe*

JASON RAMSEY

*fissure*

## FOR NOW

Is this liminal  
or limbo? Wide-smiled  
alacrity or weakening  
elasticity? We are hands  
and eyes in a way  
friends don't and we are

closer to mouthing "I love  
you" as jazz  
fills this room. This  
song just might be ours

forever or a few days. You  
write a poem on a napkin

about how my lips stained  
a shared cigarette earlier  
that day and now I am  
leaving those same lip

stains on the wine glass.  
Traces of me are  
everywhere so I linger  
long after I use  
my last adjective  
of the evening. Just as we

spill out of a side entrance  
into the hot breath and cool  
puddle of an overdue petrichor,  
we fill our lungs with bliss

instead of nicotine. I don't yet  
fret our long arguments

nor do I prepare for a clever  
comeback. Let me be naive  
just a few hours as we stop  
to live with total impermanence.

THOMAS TILTON

*liminal*

JAMIE WAY

*alacrity*

MEG JACOBSON

*room*

ERIC HOWARD

*napkin*

D.R. BAKER

*adjective*

LISA GALLOWAY

*petrichor*

CONNIE BACKUS

*comeback*

DANIEL ELLCEY

*naive*

## DAY - DRENCHED

After a cloudburst, the tree  
bark appears reptilian

especially the sweet  
gum in its damp sloth

and the slither  
of a slow trickle.

In unwavering verdure  
the midday sneaks by, stainless.

Animal and insect resume  
their wet warbling.

The robins disperse  
from trunk and fence

as limpid sky invites  
the bluest canopy.

The only video of this scene  
will play in raw memory.

Baffled, batting eyes  
adapt to the remediation

of sun in just this moment.

TOM GUMBERT

*reptilian*

OAK AYLING

*unwavering*

PEACH DELPHINE

*verdure*

MATHEW YATES

*warbling*

VENUS DAVIS

*limpid*

RELUCTANT RINGMASTER

*video*

CASSIE COLETTA

*baffled*

MADELEINE CORLEY

*remediation*

## ANAHATA

the heart rings out:  
*ylang ylang!*

incense releases,

the chest a fourth  
center.

fortitude

forsook the aorta's  
red

and now

emanates green.  
be loved, beloved,

beyond

percussion of bells,  
the body's toll.

anyone who falls

can strengthen  
their emerald

core into shape,

plug in to feel.  
that fruited

scent

twirls around  
the room, the world.

personification.

in shiver or stall  
it dizzies

as if intoxicating.  
it's dizzy

as if intoxicated.

the centermost  
chakra

bookended

by threes  
in their hat-

trick, magic.

SIHAM KARAMI

*ylang ylang*

MARIE MARTIN

*fortitude*

RACHEL TANNER

*forsook*

TZYNYA PINCHBACK

*beloved*

DENISE ENCK

*fallen*

RICKEY RIVERS, JR.

*personification*

JILL MCCABE JOHNSON

*shiver*

MELISSA RAGSLY

*hat-trick*

## IN RETROGRADE

You proceed forward  
only to reach a former self

from within its frantic shell.  
Just in from the gutter, all goes

guttural; the sound of a plum-  
black bruise. Your pain extends

to the viscera without invitation  
in visceral, prodding form. Less

is more while your comfort,  
like rosewater, becomes obsolete.

Your good heart, often tendered  
with good intention, turns useless

then turns towards the abattoir  
that takes yet leaves nothing. You

observe this and succumb to ennui  
as disconcerting as seven years

bad luck. The accompaniment  
of your fighting smirk makes

a decision with a face.

JENNA MIA

*shell*

ELFIE

*gutter*

EMMA K. SHIBLEY

*plum*

JON BOTTORFF

*black*

SAGE RAVENWOOD

*visceral*

TIFFANY SCACCIA

*obsolete*

ERIK LEONARD

*abattoir*

DEVON ORTEGA

*ennui*

### bonus words

randomly selected from an episode of  
THE GREAT BRITISH BAKING SHOW

*frantic*

*rosewater*

*often*

*seven*

*fighting*

## FINE

I cringe with my  
entire nervous  
system at the spider's  
web then long  
to place it  
in my photograph.  
There is almost  
muscle where

the silks bind  
together; opulent  
curve and square.  
I always step  
into the prickly  
glue of it, jump  
back, attached, I  
wield temporary

spinnerets; shudder  
to shutter, I snap  
back, snapshot mode,  
as light hits  
and the leftover  
net turns tinsel. My  
thigh as steady  
as a dampened

noodle, I become  
the spider's toady,  
cheering its best  
angle. A battered  
wing sighs, a fly;  
tied to the web  
as a damsel  
on the railroad

track. Another picture  
opportunity finds  
me finding the right  
cold-blood moment  
before these  
insects return  
to respective exile.

KATE BANTA

*cringe*

ERIN CORK

*muscle*

JOHN HOMAN

*prickly*

CORY FUNK

*shutter*

KAREN STEIGER

*noodle*

LIBBY CUDMORE

*toady*

FEDERICA SILVI

*exile*

## (OVER)THINK PIECE

An almost everyday ritual, the internal keening of a long-gone grandmother, a marriage discarded, the unhinged decision; no regret but the lie of no regret.

The past seems periwinkle in retrospect: that paint color winking from the hallway's entrance. Chaos was quiet but eventually would flush blood through the face or fall into a hospital bed or go driving around.

There was no element of surprise because mania played trickster. One day, legs sticking out of the closet, posed as accident, the next held high by arms at concerts.

So long later, a gist of wistfulness: the dismissed notion that there will never be another afternoon ice skating to "Build Me Up Buttercup" with a sting of iced air shared with the hockey team and their lockers pouring sweat.

Everything already done turns anathema when the brain can't choose.

ROBERT LEE BREWER

*everyday*

KARI FLICKINGER

*keening*

ELEPHANTS NEVER

*regret*

PRESTON SMITH

*periwinkle*

LIZZIE KEMBALL

*chaos*

MEG MATTHIAS

*element*

KAT GIORDANO

*buttercup*

TIFFANY BELIEU

*anathema*

## OPPOSITE ACTION

whisper to conspire                      toss  
a wrench                      into the mechanism  
that attempts                      to keep  
a serial friendship                      alive

cleave trust                      splinter/divide  
if it feels                      as good  
as gaslight                      or gone

the pressure:                      atmospheric  
till the landscape                      dig  
for others'                      gold

move catlike                      unconditional  
claw                      feline

stand                      at the riparian  
edge                      of self-satisfaction

try not to jump                      or push  
someone                      into the path  
of an oncoming                      riverscape

AARON LAMBERT

*conspire*

STUART BUCK

*wrench*

MICHAEL DICKEL

*serial*

MELISSA OSTROM

*cleave*

CARLY MADISON TAYLOR

*if*

LEE POTTS

*landscape*

KIM HARVEY

*feline*

TAKAKO TOKUOKA

*riparian*



## RIGHT ON MARIGOLD, LEFT ON CARNATION

Outside the bay  
window, on the long drive-  
way, the car driven  
drunk sits torn open  
like a poorly-healing scab  
we won't acknowledge  
as it weeps continually.

*"Willow, weep for me..."*

This bi-level with new paint  
offers a bliss we can't afford. No  
ghost, but we will leave  
this place haunted with the broken  
piano, hollow echoes of crying;  
the desolate sandbox in the shade  
of saccharine afternoons  
before black-out evenings.

*"Willow, weep for me..."*

No one learned grace here, just  
Fear as unwieldy as a kite's  
tail on a day filled with worry. Lack  
of attention meant winning  
the spelling bee, nearly  
missing "colloquial"  
in the district  
rounds. "We can't afford  
another upset."

*"Willow, weep for me..."*

BRENDAN JOYCE	<i>scab</i>
KRIS LINDBECK	<i>willow</i>
MOIRA J SAUCER	<i>bliss</i>
JANE FLEMING	<i>haunted</i>
SAMANTHA LAMPH / LEN	<i>desolate</i>
MCKENZIE KWAK	<i>saccharine</i>
JASON O' MARA	<i>grace</i>
AMANDA BUTLER	<i>colloquial</i>

## HANG IN THERE

Days spent in labyrinth  
longing to climb walls, you cheat  
the systemic nature of meandering  
depression, redeem with music;  
a solemn or caustic relief. Float  
on this note, a moth to the melody.  
Your happiness  
has not vanished. There are forearms,  
shoulders that mean very well.  
When life's dilapidated, find that  
bailiwick; that niche only you can  
fill. Ponder but do not dwell.  
Smile at life's bright graffiti  
You are lifelike like life.

MISTY D. HUDSON	<i>labyrinth</i>
GRETCHEN ROCKWELL	<i>solemn</i>
REBECCA KOKITUS	<i>moth</i>
WRITERONTHEROOF	<i>vanished</i>
NORB AIKIN	<i>dilapidated</i>
BRADLEY WRIGHT	<i>bailiwick</i>
PATRICK DORSEY	<i>ponder</i>
ADRIENNE JOHNSTON	<i>lifelike</i>

This poem was additionally inspired  
by the song "Above the Bones" by Mishka  
as suggested by

MICHAEL DICKEL

## WHENEVER

The steam of July settles  
for whatever, hangs there, barely  
billowing. It's just hot

enough for a picket line  
and drool and sweat  
hydrating

the political climate. Chants  
for more chances holler the side-  
walks and hover

the corners until ankles buckle  
outside the lines. People blur past  
in routine mimicry:

same today as yesterday  
or last week, next Thursday, a year  
from now. Everyone

not drawing attention like a child  
feverishly scrawling the future  
walks on, smooches

their loved ones. Meanwhile  
crowds yell; fight  
the humid day

to night. The rest scatter  
to the placid, toward  
the mown yard, the mountain, the lake.

PATRICK WHITED

*billowing*

SATYRICON THE

*picket*

BÁRA HLADÍK

*mimicry*

M.M. CARRIGAN

*smooches*

COOKIE HIPONIA EVERMAN

*placid*

## DEHYDRATION

Oh god, I found this fortress: the half-mile of succulent weeds, wrestling leaves trapping or consoling me in this unbearable heat. A snail adheres to the greenery at every couple of inches as my pace deflates and now it's a race as I climb hills arthritic with knees that need and they slime past me and my aspirations. It's still Father's Day and I cloak myself in slowness, aloneness. In my sun-stroke I feel so low on lithium but could swear those sticky mollusks might drag me into the shade. The musk of summer clings like a middle-grade cologne gifted from child to dad.

MATTHEW LITTLE

*fortress*

PETER H. MICHAELS

*succulent*

CASPER ALIXANDER

*snail*

ALEXIS BATES

*aspirations*

ROB DELVECCHIO

*cloak*

## THE NARROWING, THE FITTING IN

Back-lit or in the foreground, sleek filaments of paintbrush bristles or stemmed parts brighten in museum or arboretum. Curious observers become enthralled with how they dance until vertigo and they grow.

Tug at the soil with toes on an overcast day, clouds crowded like a gallery grand opening. Run for the art and flower even if only in mind without leaving the body.

Who knew except you that there was synergy between the howl of portraits' grimaced faces and the voluptuous petals in the greenhouse?

ANKH SPICE

*filaments*

SIERRA RITTUE

*enthralled*

NATALIE KOCSIS

*vertigo*

HOLLY SALVATORE

*soil*

LISA WEBER

*synergy*

ELODIE BARNES

*voluptuous*

## LALA LAND

so close to a fugue  
limp in the clothes rack

lights flickered poorly

she became her tattoo  
a branching tree  
but she's up-  
rooting

i become a badlands  
so little to give

my presence eroded  
and erroneous i try  
to support her drooping body

i am equipped with compassion  
but only a scintilla of know-how

she makes her first escape  
into seizure  
while i scream

ANDREW SHATTUCK MCBRIDE *fugue*

RICHARD WEISER *branching*

AMY PARKES *badlands*

STEPHANIE BENTON *erroneous*

MATTHEW M.C. SMITH *scintilla*

KRISTIN GARTH *escape*

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

If you write at night  
a savage sleepiness lets loose:  
hides between clever lines  
and breaks into the poem's dark  
room for a power nap.

It doesn't pay attention to the meter,  
turns trochaic into something archaic  
and fetid to seep under the carpet's  
cover of damp floorboard  
where the total syllables  
remain uncounted, discarded.

Who cares if you are right?  
The sky doesn't wake for your whim.  
At day's end, the pulchritude  
is immense, subjective  
and derived. It is a thing  
best sensed with the whole  
self and not to have, halved.

If you skywrite at night  
invisible ink cannot compete  
with constellations  
pin-balling in rapid  
dot-to-dot  
between stars.

MARINA SCHROEDINGER *savage*

LAURA LEE *fetid*

JEANNIE PRINSEN *total*

CARLA MARCHAL *pulchritude*

NADIA GERASSIMENKO *skywrite*

ZARANA *rapid*

## FOUR SQUARE

a crush  
of colorful chalk  
dusts the concrete  
as unapologetic  
feet and ball  
bounce above

it hangs on, week-  
long: sidewalk art  
on the verge  
of a spring storm  
until only nostalgic  
specimen remains

HEATHEN DERR-SMITH

*crush*

RICHARD WARING

*unapologetic*

LAURA MOTAVASSELI

*bounce*

PAUL BROOKES

*verge*

ANCA SEGALL

*spring*

JESSIE LYNN MCMAINS

*specimen*



## NEVER BETTER

standing on any other planet  
one can see our pandemic  
of sadness. the topography  
shows its contusions  
and all that confuses:  
here, a sinkhole, there an oil  
spill. everything worn-out  
appears in flagrancy: the rancid  
meat, the broke-down streets  
and all of this hidden beyond  
a human holding on for hope  
and the notion of consistency.

BAILEY GREY

*pandemic*

ALLIE MARINI

*sinkhole*

KEEF

*spill*

GERAMEE HENSLEY

*flagrancy*

JOHN W. LEYS

*hope*

AMANDA HUBIK

*consistency*



# B O N U S P O E M S

In this first bonus poem, I wanted to enlist the help of others who could donate lines of their choosing, a title, and the overall theme.

I originally aimed to find 150 people to donate 150 words. I was lucky to not only meet that goal, but to exceed it. The original 21 poems include 160 words donated by 160 people!

In celebration of meeting and surpassing the initial goal, I asked the 150<sup>th</sup> word donor to choose a title for this poem and a theme. I asked the 1<sup>st</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> through 160<sup>th</sup> word donors to provide a line of poetry between 2-10 words in length. Many were able to take part in the first of these three supplemental poem sections that I was so excited to add to this chapbook.

This was indeed the most challenging poem for me as I had to marry vastly differing phrases with a theme and title beyond my choosing. But as is probably apparent from reading this chapbook or having followed this project in its progress, I am always up for making poems out of unique pieces!

The following list contains the names of contributors to this unique collaborative effort and their contributions! The resulting poem appears on the proceeding pages.

AMY PARKES

TITLE

*"Self-portrait as a [x]keeper" where [x] is whatever animal gets mentioned in donated words*

THEME

*gratitude*

LINES

KAREN BUTAK

*(some derivation of the words "whir" and "spokes" as a bicycle)*

TOM SNARSKY

*a field like a billowy dress*

KYLA HOUBOLT

*after a flood, waterline marks the linoleum*

MCKENZIE KWAK

*Straddling the chasm between before and after*

ANDREW SHATTUCK MCBRIDE

*the rumble and crash of thunder*

KARI FLICKINGER

*sincere conifer conflation*

RICKEY RIVERS, JR.

*Hold us closely*

LEAH CALLEN

*tonight the sky is a bloodstain.*

LIZZIE KEMBALL

*the candle dies — smoke clinging to the embers light*

## SELF-PORTRAIT AS A MOTH-KEEPER

No worries like my old worries, or butterflies,  
magnified. With breath  
and thanks I hold air in my lungs, close  
my eyes and feel  
open; my mind whirs like bicycle spokes  
then settles  
its brakes. I break into cool, wanted sweat  
and release; the cooling  
becomes light and breezy as a field  
like a billowy dress.  
I envision liquid now, straight from the tap.  
I am humbled  
by the faucet and what comes next. I know  
time goes on  
but intrusive thoughts block my meditation; clutter  
my mind instead. I think  
about how we are just days after a flood, waterline  
marks the linoleum  
with a permanence that acts as tick-mark  
on an untimely wall.  
Straddling the chasm between before  
and after this moment,  
I stay present by saying "om" or "one."  
Right now, I am  
timeless and limitless and mindful  
but mindless. Deep  
inhale as I clear a path as my mind's  
trail is off. I must stay  
focused and recall my blessings, forget  
the rumble and crash  
of thunder that shook the city before the gusts  
were overwhelmed.  
I let images pass by but my brain stops  
at the most sincere  
conifer conflation where the pine forest  
of different needles  
welcomes me on my course. Just as I

relax to sit  
on a felled tree, I remember to return  
to the breath; to let go  
of all attachment. My mantra becomes  
"Hold us closely"  
but I am not sure who we are and who will  
embrace this quiet  
mind in time. Before I attempted to love  
myself today  
I assumed the morning was a fluke,  
and am slightly  
convinced that even tonight the sky  
is a bloodstain.  
But nothing bleeds and oxygen  
is the only concern  
as it clears another path. As I near  
my time to rise  
and fall into bed, I watch a moth edging its wings  
to the fiery light  
melting the wax beside my bed.  
The only way  
to save this daring thing is to exhale, extinguish.  
The candle dies –  
smoke clinging to the embers light  
the way as the moth  
flits from flannel to flannel in the hallway  
closet.

These next 5 poems show how uniquely 5 words can be used by different writers! Myself and 4 other poets wrote a poem each for this bonus section and we incorporated the donated words in our work.

The 5 words were donated by...

AMANDA HUBIK *acclimate*

AMY POAGUE *iridesce*

ANNE WALTERS *whiskers*

KILEY LEE *boot*

PRESTON SMITH *cacophony*

## Unmarketable

Blinding  
a blazing light straight to the ear

Cacophony holds  
my reaction over me  
daring me to take it  
from its searing grasp

I could never acclimate,  
the hand of the ruckus  
can never fade into the background  
while its fist squeezes my eardrums

Pulling at the whiskers of old Lady Peace  
my own hands yearn to pull up  
one grey hair  
to watch it iridesce into a tranquil streak  
twine to tie a thought back to its core  
itself

And the blaze relents to my twine  
my eyes open  
wide  
as the Sun is to Venus  
my legs move  
laden  
as atrophy is to a lead boot

cold hands give me what cacophony held  
while the new memory plays out slowly  
I don't think to accept  
Instead instinct turns it to rest

*River Fujimoto*

## Second-Hand Maps and Other Obtuse Devices of Self-Discovery

### I: Factotum and Reliquary

Bolan said we are built  
Like cars, but somewhere  
The hubcaps got lost, not  
A diamond or halo in sight – just  
Rusty sheet metal and door dings  
Boot to bonnet, chipped  
Glass and suspect transmission.  
Its not the age,  
it's the miles.  
A trade-in out of the question.

### II: Hibernaculum and Subaudition

First fissures thin as whiskers  
Hidden by new flakes  
At night we startle awake  
When the surface shifts  
With a bang or unearthly ping  
Out among the light coated  
Pines we skate, old hands  
In our own frost to find  
The veins heaved up.  
In the spring the lake  
Bears none of the scars.

### III: Threnody and Aubade

It is unwise, as dangerous  
As Thanksgiving pond ice,  
To ever acclimate to  
The cacophony of another's  
Breath during sleep.

### IV: Iridesce and Coruscate

You -me -we -one  
Must be open to  
Joy for it to glow  
Sparkling like bits  
Of flint and steel  
Raked in the need  
For warmth, light.  
When you are in  
Deep woods trouble  
Build a long fire,  
That is as tall as  
You are while supine  
To survive the dark  
Bills that come due.

*Cory Funk*

## Advice For When It's All Shiny And New

Acclimate to dizziness. Put your hand against a wall  
or a strong back to steady yourself.

There will be a cacophony of notions, swirling  
hewillmakeyouhappyhewillmakeyouwholeyouarebetternow

Some things will be true:  
Rasp of whiskers on your bare thigh.  
How yearning blossoms from the smell of a dirty ball cap.  
The way your name is complete coated in the timbre of his voice.

No matter how familiar it seems, no matter how perfect the fit —  
like a boot you've owned for years, insole moulded to the shape  
of your foot, even the broken baby toe that healed crooked  
feels right here. Everything  
is right here —  
no, it's fucking enchanted  
and rare as a goddamn gem

remember  
not even diamonds iridesce forever.

*Kim Mannix*

## Walking the Hundred-Acre Wood

At the end of my dead-end street,  
a trailhead for the Hundred-Acre Wood  
beckons. Earthmoving equipment  
and heavy vehicles have moved on.  
On asphalt, pools of cars' leaked oil  
iridesce in a sunbreak. On the trail  
I gain distance from the cacophony  
of sounds blaring the city's rude news.  
Petrichor rises from damp earth. Quiet deepens  
into the welcome respite of natural sounds.  
I boot anxiety and concerns as I walk  
deeper into the Hundred-Acre Wood, grateful  
that the city purchased this parcel  
of densely-forested land, slated  
for development till recently. Here  
I don't have to worry about my appearance  
or trimming my whiskers; I can just be.  
As I acclimate to this oasis, I realize  
the grip of my anxiety has loosened  
and my concerns seem manageable.  
Here, the future is big-hearted, open-ended.

*Andrew Shattuck McBride*

## disturbing peace

something blooms  
fragrant, purple, wild,  
but is unlike the neighbor's  
lilac bush. something with whiskers  
takes puffed-chest sigh  
and umbrage at our blazing  
this trail. something  
mossy covers slick  
rock under heavy boot  
and no guide can identify  
this or that striped bird  
that decides not to take  
part in the cacophony  
of nature sounds. something  
glints off the sunlit creek  
while small fish iridesce beneath  
the shallow. something attempts  
to acclimate but will never quite  
belong.

*K Weber*

\*I also added the following suggestion simply because I could and this project is all about challenge and accepting literary assistance!

STUART BUCK

*umbrage*

## RIVER FUJIMOTO

is a trans writer, baker, and tea enthusiast living in Ohio. Her work is featured with *Five: 2: One Magazine* and the *Wellington Street Review*. Follow her on twitter @gongfu\_fighter!

## CORY FUNK

is a music junkie who lives in St Paul, MN. His written work has appeared in *Memoir Mixtapes*, *The Blue Pages*, *Moonchild Magazine*, and *Mookychick*. Cory has had photography published in *Kissing Dynamite*.

## KIM MANNIX

is a poet and short fiction writer from Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. You can find out more about her work and publications at <http://www.makesmesodigress.com> or on Twitter @KimMannix.

## ANDREW SHATTUCK MCBRIDE

is an editor and writer based in Bellingham, WA. Co-editor, *For Love of Orcas* (Wandering Aengus, 2019). Words in *Crab Creek Review*, *Empty Mirror*, and *Floating Bridge Review*



I wanted the opportunity to take a backseat from writing a poem to be the one who supplies the word donations. For this grand finale, I was able to enlist a poet whose writing I enjoy a lot and am so glad this wonderful person was up to the task. Here are the 5 words I challenged the author to incorporate into a poem:

*baby*

*footfall*

*overjoyed*

*signing*

*tawny*

KILEY LEE

is an Appalachian artist and writer, with work in multiple publications and exhibitions across the United States. For more information, please visit: <http://linktr.ee/kileylee>

## Ground Wells

I was overjoyed to see,

rebel reds turn tawny  
and fall —

*Revolution:*

To dying spirits  
still living in  
green fields  
fair forever

Hardly.

Ever.

Young eyes tell who's in  
the corner: baby, *baby*.  
Heart hammers bringing rage  
as heavy footfall — ringing in ears  
and collapsing chest caverns  
have me signing my life away  
Every breath *should have*  
*Purpose*.

Should

Have

Need.

*Kiley Lee*

## THANKS

So many people to thank! You'll see all the key players names throughout but to express it more outwardly: THANK YOU ENDLESSLY to all 165 people who took a chance and assisted with this project. One thing I find is that asking for help is sometimes a very hard thing to do. The outpouring of enthusiasm over this project is seriously uplifting. This didn't feel too much like work and a lot of hands and some people wearing many hats were along for the ride!

Thanks to anyone reading this collection. it has been good therapy for me to focus on something positive and interactive.

Thanks to all who inspire and especially those who leave their hearts and heads open to continually be inspired!

Giving myself a nod because this was a medically and mentally confusing year but as the new year and decade approach, I see some positive changes on the horizon.

I save so many comments that have been left regarding past donated word poems and THIS ASSEMBLY. This is a favorite and I feel it really speaks volumes about what I/we do when we create these donated word poems together:

"Like alchemy, [K Weber] can transform a bunch of random words into an incredible poem! This is fun to participate in as word-contributor... you get to scan the end result & say 'look, THERE'S MY WORD! It's in a poem!'"

-TODD SMITH

It never gets old when people say they can't wait to see how I crafted a poem containing their word selection. One word can change a day, a mood, the world.

This has been a fulfilling and engaging project. It is also the first time I really let go and interacted with so many people on a large-scale writing project that was different than some of the ways in which I have created in the past. Along with the word donors and creators of new poems for this effort, I had an overwhelming amount of people of various levels of editing experience, some who I had never talked to before, offer to be readers and reviewers.

These are the individuals who took time out of busy schedules and their own projects to assist me in ensuring the poems I created were in their best final form:

ENNIS R. BASHE

STUART BUCK

HANNAH CAJANDIG-TAYLOR

JULIE ELDER

MEGAN GARNER

HOKIS

MARCELLE NEWBOLD

SIERRA RITTUE

HOLLY SALVATORE

TIFFANY SCIACCA

MEGHA SOOD

PRESTON SMITH

## ABOUT THE COVER/INTERIOR ART

The cover and interior art was developed by a good friend of mine based on our discussions surrounding the word “assembly” and some photos I had taken of the former GM plant in our region that has stood nearly empty for a very long time. The juxtaposition of an assembly plant standing mostly silent within a book teeming with progress and togetherness combines a certain local nostalgia and this recent work of cumulative talents that represents current and future production.

I enjoy Greg’s artwork so much and he was the perfect person to combine so many facets of this project AND he used those poll-winning colors with so much feeling. He has been generous with his time and art for THIS ASSEMBLY!

## GREG LAWHUN

is a graduate of The Columbus College of Art & Design who spends his days making comics and animation. He has a giant collection of books and movies, a small collection of synthesizers and vinyl records, and several old still-functioning video game systems. He’s lived through two tornado attacks, drinks all the coffee, likes Formula 1, smokes cigars, messes around with aquariums and is mostly enjoying entering middle age.

## AUTHOR BIO

K WEBER

lives and writes in southwestern Ohio.

THIS ASSEMBLY is her 5<sup>th</sup> self-published online chapbook and audiobook project.

Her writing has been included in issues of *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Detritus Online*, *Black Bough Poetry*, *Writer's Digest*, *Moonchild Magazine*, *Theta Wave* and more!

Her photography has appeared in such literary magazines as *Barren Magazine* and *Nightingale & Sparrow*.

K earned her BA in Creative Writing from Miami University in 1999.

More publishing credits and access to all of her online book projects at:  
<http://kweberandherwords.wordpress.com>



## SPECIAL NOTES

### THIS ASSEMBLY AUDIOBOOK

The audio version of THIS ASSEMBLY  
can be accessed from the link in my bio!

I read poems and made the music/  
noise/soundscapes throughout!  
4 of the guest poem writers in the bonus portion  
of THIS ASSEMBLY read their poems for the audiobook!  
Love all these voices whether on audio or in text!

### REGARDING ORIGINAL WRITTEN AND VISUAL WORK

All unique poems and artwork  
belong to the artists! I am grateful  
to have so many friends create new work  
for this project, but I do not own their work!  
I encourage all who generated original pieces  
for THIS ASSEMBLY to submit elsewhere  
for publication if they so choose!

Here's a list of links to my other projects!

**a 5K** - I sometimes record myself reading 5 poems:  
<http://kweberanda5k.wordpress.com>

**dot art** - I make art with dots:  
<http://kweberandherdots.wordpress.com>

**radio shows**: I used to be an online DJ.  
sometimes my old shows resurface  
for your/my enjoyment:  
<http://kweberandhershow.wordpress.com>

**song recommendations**: I have had quite a few  
published at Memoir Mixtapes since 2018...  
here are all of my recommendations to date:  
<https://medium.com/@kweberandherwords>

