

# A Few Words

from Jan Carroll

Spring 2023

## Listening for the Timbre

Even the few strewn  
crumbs on the cutting board long after  
the bread is gone tremble at the passing  
of the trucks.

Traffic is a sustained bland  
blare that brags that it understands where  
we are going. But I like the song. It sings  
me to sleep.

My head against my bent  
arm against the table conducts the tremor  
of my heartbeat, silent and seismic, to the water in five  
clear bottles.

Soon I'll have to scrape,  
prime and paint the stained spots on the ceiling  
in the bedroom where the pipes upstairs burst, years  
ago, and rained.

Several rose finches  
mime the workings of a clock in the gray circle  
of the tray feeder, nervous, driven here  
by a scent of seed.

The ivy grows down  
behind the back of the piano where the light  
reaches it in a steep, cloistered free-space  
no one can see.

One grain of salt  
lodges in the fault at the center of the table where the missing  
leaf would go, if I could find it, to make more room  
for company.

Crow on the shoulder of an oak  
rakes no noise as I approach, keeps a cautionary  
stare on me as I move through his owned,  
known landscape.

I take one giant  
step over the half-frozen jack of spades  
decomposing in an ice-rimmed mud puddle  
in the spring thaw.



## Of all things, this

Then, of all things, this freak snow sprawls  
un-asked-for on plastic-webbed chairs,  
on geranium skeletons left in clay pots  
and on you as you stand against the elements  
sheltering the weak seared orange pulse  
on newspaper ridges and scrap wood,  
firewormed kindling piled—no, thrown—into the black  
bowl of the grill. Late fall's last ashes rise, a maniac  
from the stirred pit, the kept cauldron,  
mitigate the eccentric swirls  
of late spring snow. You shift weight from tread to tread,  
a nervous twitch. Your whole body is bowed  
convex membrane. You want the wild spark  
in this new eye and will not  
blink.



## NEWS

### MY NEW BOOK

The new books are here!

I'll be having a reading/book launch to celebrate its arrival on Tuesday, April 11 at 6:00 at Artisan Forge Studios. Free admission. Cash bar. Books will be available to purchase (cash and checks only—or via Paypal) and I will be happy to sign a copy for you.

Artisan Forge Artist Spotlight: painter and sculptor Terry Meyer, who will also have work available for purchase.

### THANK YOU

Many thanks to everyone who attended the Chippewa Valley Symphony Orchestra event on March 4 along with the Chippewa Valley Festival Choir, Dr. Jerry Hui, and Dr. Paul Thomas. I so much appreciate all your support and kind words. It was a joy to talk with so many of you afterward. What an honor and delight to be part of that evening!



### WHAT I'M READING LATELY

Carl Phillips's poems are eloquent and thoughtful, inextricably tied to emotion. They are self-examining but also often carry notes of redemption and reconciliation. And always, insight.

#### In a Low Voice, Slowly

So stubborn, and as if almost necessary, this  
    little wind, playing the leaves, their surfaces, playing  
the leaves where they lie fallen, while not once  
    rearranging them. Like being asked what, if anything,  
do you regret at this point; and, as answer, shaping  
    your own smallish song around how knowing isn't  
understanding, isn't mystery either, which isn't un-knowing,  
    not exactly, more like deciding to turn abruptly  
east after so many years westering, what kind of answer  
    was that? Sometimes the past seems the stuff of heraldry,  
figures proper on a ground of good and evil. Other times  
    the past sways ocean-like above me. There's a sound  
deer still make when in sixes they come down  
    from the hills at sunrise, the kind of sunrise where  
no sun's visible, but it's daylight, and just the rain, and  
    the deer passing like their own form of light through it;  
their hooves mark the damp ground incidentally,  
    no particular meaning. It's true that love marks the body.



From his book *Then the War*, 2020.

Some readers have asked how they can support my creative work, besides buying a book when they come out.

First of all, the newsletter **remains FREE of charge**.

But, if you would like to donate something to the cause, you can do so via Paypal  
(use my email, [jan.carroll333@gmail.com](mailto:jan.carroll333@gmail.com)).