

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Sara Moore Wagner: Three Poems

Sara Moore Wagner · Wednesday, February 11th, 2026

Root Causes

My father was raised on cow's milk from birth,
wouldn't take to his mother, left me in a field. My father

fell asleep by the campfire. When I took this body,
he put me in a flame. Five times

into the river, I went. I was baptized in the church
of my mother, all white robed and death

to sin, but no, nothing would turn me back
to that girl he left in the forest, abandoned.

He dragged me over the hills he came from, Ohio's
Appalachia, ancient, history unraveling like skin

in little pockets of soil and you grew there, Daisy,
little bud of me. We were born of eternal numbers:

eight moons, eight worlds, two circles
linked. We dance eight nights in eight skins.

We are so honest. Carry a twin diagnosis.
What can I give you of my childhood

but this body of my father, a beet I blend
into your smoothie.

*

Divergent Opinions

My daughter tells me $1+1=\text{window}$:
the spaces. The frame. In her Montessori school,

she studies elephant numbers. She is told she is strange
 by a girl who can't see numbers as windows,
 will never know that twos are close to hearts,
 that an eight is both lucky and unlucky,
 because of Saturn, somehow, or Satan,
 somehow, words always creating other words,
 depending on your understanding of things
 like suffering and death, whether you say
 four or shi, autism or spectrum, desire
 or eros, repetition or desire.
 If you believe in numbers
 and curses, there are unlucky numbers,
 thirteen and six, the round slope of nine
 which in Japanese sounds like *suffering*. Four
 is *death*, shi. One day, she'll hear this
 and, maybe, it will make her feel
 like a window or opening, like space
 unravels.

*

On Changelings

In the ceremony, I bathe in a pool
 my father dug for me, bathe
 in the white dress my mother wore
 until it melts to soapy residue,
 coats the yard like Christmas snow.
 My skin pills gray stones, gravels
 me. I am a driveway now.
 It's my driveway to my house.
 I am not the girl who threw curses
 carved into broken branches
 into the well until that well
 knew all our names, even the secret ones:
 Winter, Crane Fly, Loss.
 I take ibuprofen now at night to sleep
 through the things I've done and undone,
 the call of that old well. It drew and then
 receded into the ground supply, taking
 with it every sacred want for violence,
 every prayerful unraveling, like my voice
 was a ribbon on a tree. Father. Father,
 see me kneeling, half girl, half stone.
 I am made in the image of things like kettle,
 lamp, bookcase. My mother rinsing
 clay from her face. I am made to hold something
 and provide, to service with my body

and mind. I am clinging to the earth
as if it were a road and not just the way
in, always in, smooth as asphalt, almost
real. I am almost ready to unfold my hand and show
you what it is I've been holding, whose name.
Each night, how my mother rinsed
clay from her face.
My daughter's.

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