

blinding light
which shimmers
and stirs-- trees tilt;
crows grow silent.
Dragonflies dart
in from the edges
and fresh from feeding.
They flutter,
storm-tattered.
He calls,
body to body--
the female turns,
opens her wings.

Part II *Below*

Dandelion seed heads
larger than the moon
and closer,
echo the big head above,
their bright centers
outshining hers,
a perilous equilibrium.
With tethers loosened,
tender parachutes open,
seeds pause
above the seam
marking separation
between earth and sky.
They hover, wait
for the humid gust,
wait for the release,
for the wandering--
time encased
in a brown egg.

Part III *To One Side*

The artist's journals
are stacked slightly askew,
his life deposited
in sedimentary layers,
handwriting
even and legible--
Dead Sea Scrolls
from West Seneca.
Sealed in reliquary frame
an oak leaf
the color of old leather
or ancient flesh
stands at attention
as if still caught
upright in the grass

of the neighboring yard,
a banner for a dying man
in the dying light.

Solitude

[Karen Lee Lewis](#)

“Oh that I could only wander into such a place.” Charles Burchfield April 21, 1948

After Charles Burchfield’s “Solitude”

1

Begin with my name, my self
add a year or a decade
an apostrophe—turn away
from what I am
what I have
become—what I have omitted
the parts of myself
I keep contained

2

I’ve built a body
from charcoal lines
you can mount
the ladder of my ribs
lay your hand on my granite face
My thoughts are soft
and black like leeches

3

Underneath understanding
I cannot tell
my edges from my shadows

4

Yellow is my first true light
long fringes among a stand of trees
a golden comb that rakes
what is left of evergreen
one spark is all I need

5

Solitude is sinking
to the bottom
of a well-liked dream

Subconscious:
a snail pulled from its shell

6

I listen to Sibelius
play with rocks and water
I like when there is no one
to talk to
my breath returns

Someone is always watching
a spirit that threatens
to unseal the visions
locked inside my soul's ravine

Who doesn't need
an ice cave trimmed in hemlock
to freeze what is troubling

7

The geology of my heart—
a cave of sorrows

Under current
everything is mud
my father buried
like a fossil
like a sacrifice

8

The water holds me
The water repels me
Everything is revelation
I cannot possess what I create

9

It takes a fall
to unleash a power
that brings me to my knees
to grow from this liberation
to break apart my wonder
a rainbow
the shimmer of what could be

Meltwater of hope
I am born of mist
and last year's grass

Clusters of catkins

torchbearers of spring
send the ghosts of winter
into hiding

10

When I am alone
the dead rise—
the hair on the back
of my neck

When I am alone
the dead release
the knots in trees

When I am alone
the dead walk
on water

Trilogy: or Split Personalities

Crossing the Border
Kate Soudant

She stands alone
in the winter of her life,
frozen to life's possibilities
Certain of her future,
as whispered by the winds of ancestors

Their pleas stronger with each passing year
Resisting, but connection somehow comforting.
Is now the time to join them?
So far, she has been blessed.
Her resilient and curious cornerstone,
forged by familial heritage
and happenstance of good fortune.

From the East, the determined
unfolding of lush landscape is sensed.
Nature slowly emerges-
promising alchemy for change.
Spring crosses the border.
Ancestors must wait.

Burchfield's Leaf

Hey you,
Whatcha standing there for,
Alone in the cold.
If you don't get in here, you could
freeze, maybe stick there forever...
Or end up in them catacombs across

the road.

Don't you see 'em comin'
Those big ones from the East.
Looking kinda scary, with their
giant hoodies and lean, tough bodies.
Betcha think the old man will
protect you...just cause he's 'one of
em'.

Remember Mr. Tough Guy,
Ya make your choices,
ya get whats comin'.
And don't forget,
I warned ya!

A (common) love story

You took my breath away
Standing there, like you owned the world.
I never saw anyone so brave or strong
or heroic – my dream come true.

I knew in an instant that I would give
myself to you – always and forever.

It didn't matter that armies were
amassing from the East,
intent to break us apart.
Is there ever a love story without 'complication'?

Shall we run for it?
Or, do I, like so many others have done before,
just turn around and go back inside?

No Man's Land

[Josh Smith](#)

Gonna point my light at the city skyline,
Desert roads will take me there.
Horizon's bleeding drops of daytime,
Highway's built with extra patience.

Stay forever, in the midnight station,
Sing the sorrow, like those who came before.
Praise the devil, with sin and your frustrations,
Paint the mirror black to match the water.

Gonna point my light at the city skyline,
Desert birds won't lead the way.
Following the buzzing grapevine,

Gonna get me home, gonna get me free.

The Constant Leaf

(The Steadfast Leaf)

Charles E. Burchfield, 1960

Celeste M. Lawson

A life in notes, exclamation points and dashes
Monochromatic
Riddled with questions, but no answers
An icy stare
Nature's frost bitten revenge on time
A canvass tear-stained with bland blemishes of salt
Why not the red of menses
Why only the residue of indecision
Why so impossible to lay seamless the androgyny
Note the arches, poised and softly opaque
Deliberately faded with wishful strokes
Nostalgia beckons across the landscape
Its allure persistent, daring
Just one step over its threshold
His soul is scarred but not for sale
His agony is chronicled – subtext
Pages with commas between moments
Joy in lower case letters
Branches have become leafless twigs
But deeply rooted despite the wind
They will learn to subsist on his visions and be satisfied
I know they all hunger
But I do not

An April Mood

Sarah Averill

"All afternoon, until well after 6, on a large painting of the woods, the swamp with its winding creek and the hills beyond. I tried to hold myself down in size, but could not..."—Charles Burchfield's journal, 26 March, 1946

"The mood I aimed at was the anger of God—a good Friday mood."—C. B.

The trees break in the light break
the light itself sharp stalks of tree
on hills beyond

the darkest cloud
removing the light

To the right: a hint
of disappearing wing

i.

Rocks emerge from swamp;

a gesture of rain, a small movement
on the creek's surface

A tree has collapsed
to still the water

which, as Lao-Tzu says
has no purpose of its own

ii.

There, among the near trees:
a sort of hollowness.

iii.

The branches of the downed tree strain,
through watercolour sky,

a perhaps lightening
beyond the hills, a hint
of refracted sun

Above,
wing becomes a murder
of crows, silhouetted
in retreat against the clouds

iv.

Nine years later
the first tree still dead

is given a terminus,

a giltedged point

which stabs up beyond clouds
like the needle of a compass
quivering toward sky

Field Song

[Lisa Forrest](#)

For Charles Burchfield

Listen long

to the song
of the telegraph

weird
beautiful
moonlit dawn

star muted
morning
sorrow

March rutted
rows & seams
wind harp spring

knotty eyed
crow edged caw
bird blue halo call--

old yearning hums along the wire

Dandelion Seeds

[Rachel Johnson](#)

For Charles Burchfield's *Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon*

Up
Is it day or night?
Prostitution is not generosity

Is it windy or calm?
Sexual harassment is not admiration

Up
Is it a pine tree branch or crow?
Domestic violence is not love

A vibrant moon
Lights the night
Though winged need no light
To navigate this night

While the rest stay
The wind blew the dandelion seed Up

Windy night yet
Calm tonight.
Protection options in action

Heat Wave in a Swamp of Questions

[George Hole](#)

With the curious title *Heat Wave in a Swamp*.
What desire or thought, most moist and muddy
Hides in this congregation of paintings?
Where does the heat wave or swamp hide
In *Dandelion seed heads and the moon*?

Look, do those large dandelions bend
In reverence or bend to expose their testicle-brown
Stems? They seem anxious for a climaxing wind
To carry their white crowns adorned
With spiked parachute-sperm, ready
For flight to fertile ground, never knowing
Their children who will become weeds
When they land on civilized lawns.
Two dragonflies hover, shyly, meditating on
A flight-path on moon-rays for a rendezvous
With their other image. What thought darkens
The trees at the edge between field and sky?
What fantasy lies out of sight, in awe
And ache in a painting, this painting?

To find a swamp go into a swamp
Where insects drill under skin into nerve-ends
And draw blood; where chemistry works
Its magical rot-making smells and ooze.
Walk carefully. So it is possible to sink into
Creation, the one before Let there
Be light whose eyes saw it was good.
The moon makes small moving circles
On brown water next to the stump bank
Where the curled water moccasin waits
Listening to lawless sounds concealed in night.
Where is the heat wave, other than
In a wave of fear of even the thought
Of entering a hungry swamp after dark?

In the *seed heads* painting could there be a swamp
And heat wave there, inside that almost
Invisible face, not the face of gallery-goer next to yours,
No, in that own-most face, the inner-most
One who is looking back at you in the protecting glass
For something too dangerously alive to let die?