CANDACE PEARSON

Candace Pearson’s Hour of Unfolding received the Liam Rector First Book Prize for Poetry from Briery Creek Press. Her poems have appeared in fine journals and anthologies nationwide. A multiple Pushcart Prize nominee, she grew up in the “other” California—farm country—and now lives in in an old hiker’s cabin in the foothills of Los Angeles.
MOSES, THE BATHER

In those last days

*though we did not know they were the last,*

*we suspected; though we knew they were the last,*

*we could not count them; we could not*

*accept they were the last, even as they mocked us*

*with their velocity*

we lost all sense of privacy. More and more

strangers entered your dying, as though waving goodbye
took many hands, not simply yours or mine.
Yet amid the intruders—dispensers of drugs, dispensers
of advice in all directions, of regret—
came Moses, the bather, and you a water child
ready to be bathed.

We showed him the recipe (colloidal oatmeal, hydrogen
peroxide, ancient salts) you’d devised to rid your body
of toxins. He followed it faithfully, lowered you
into the current. Your final submersion. From the Nile
back to the Nile.

*I’m an Aquarian, a water bearer,* you used to tell me,
to explain your need for high dives

and deep-running tides. I don’t believe in
horoscopes, just as I don’t believe in the protective power
of family or the infallibility of love.

Later, when you could no longer be carried like a raja
on someone’s shoulders, Moses with his anointed cloths
and sponges, his soft ablutions, bathed you
where you lay.

The day after you died, Moses called to say, *Sorry,*

*so sorry,* the static in his voice white water
flowing over rocks.
BODY OF LAND

In this knowing unknowable land
the breathing earth the sky lit by cloud
speak a vocabulary of wind indifferent
to footprints

and we find ourselves inside the geography
of permanence & change the only question
how to find our way forward
as sapling or shadow

Do this succumb to the comfort of rectangles
press your ear to a cottonwood
to its whisper and hum

patterns emerge

there in the distance
what we’ve looked for all along
life on a curve
the infinite line