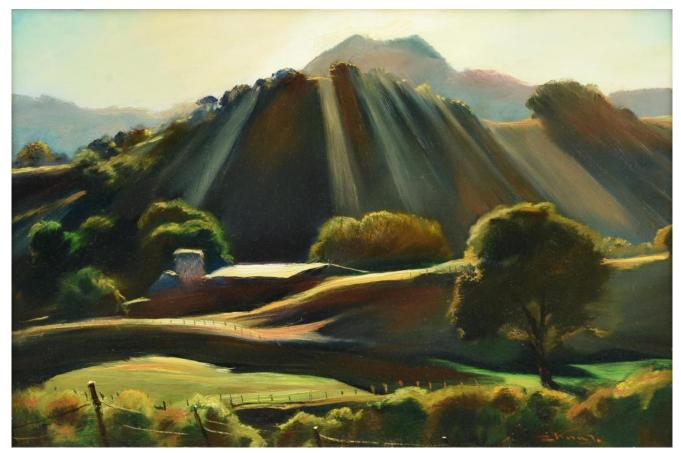
A Front Porch in Pikeville

by Colleen S. Harris (April 2025)



Sunlight over the Hills (Emil Kosa, Jr., 20th C)

A Front Porch in Pikeville, Circa 1998 for Jason

I stepped out onto a porch with a snoring hound and a wide swing the breadth of my need. The rickety perch held firm while his mother

warmed her hands on her coffee cup, predicted who might attend the local apple festival in an accent my New York ears would take six more months

to translate well, and my Long Island mouth

would adopt in small measure over three more years. That dancing cadence, matching

callouses on our hands, the dog asleep beneath the slats, encouraged me to trust my weight to the swing, to trust this modest house—

six hundred and ninety-three miles from my house, two hundred and four miles from my dorm where my mother thought I was

studying for a microeconomics midterm—
would hold me. I dangled above the dog and lost
myself in her Appalachian song, in the saffron

and crimson waves of those Kentucky hills, gentler than the roiling Atlantic that battered me through my uncertain youth. I basked in the arm-drape

of the first boy who taught me I could feel safe in someone else's hands, that I could be delivered like an unbroken promise after a baptism of Goldschlager

and apple pie shine into my roommate's resigned hands, to wake fully clothed with my first tattoo, shoes still on, to fourteen missed calls from my mother.

Tell the Bees

In Europe, they would tell the bees about important happenings: new baby, lost seanmháthair, how the eldest

daughter was finally wed and well

on her way to motherhood. Without news, the bees might stop making

honey, might leave, might die. I gaze out at the lawn, left long for the little pollinators, and worry. Should I tell

them you are not coming back?
That your books and polo shirts
Escaped the closets, and my books

are expanding to fill empty space, like lungs filling with the first breath of April air after too long inside?

Would they like to know the hound that haunted the rusted water-spout where they congregate at noon

has died? If bees have time to listen, I may hover over the milkweed, whisper to them so they can go back

to the hive and dance to pass on gossip, to waggle, shake, and tremble to my small tragedies and triumphs.

Table of Contents

Colleen S. Harris earned her MFA in Writing from Spalding University. A three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, her poetry collections include *The Light Becomes Us* (Main Street Rag, forthcoming 2025), *Babylon Songs* (First Bite Press,

forthcoming 2026), These Terrible Sacraments (Bellowing Ark, 2010; Doubleback, 2019), The Kentucky Vein (Punkin House, 2011), God in My Throat: The Lilith Poems (Bellowing Ark, 2009), and chapbooks That Reckless Sound and Some Assembly Required (Pork Belly Press, 2014).

Follow NER on Twitter @NERIconoclast