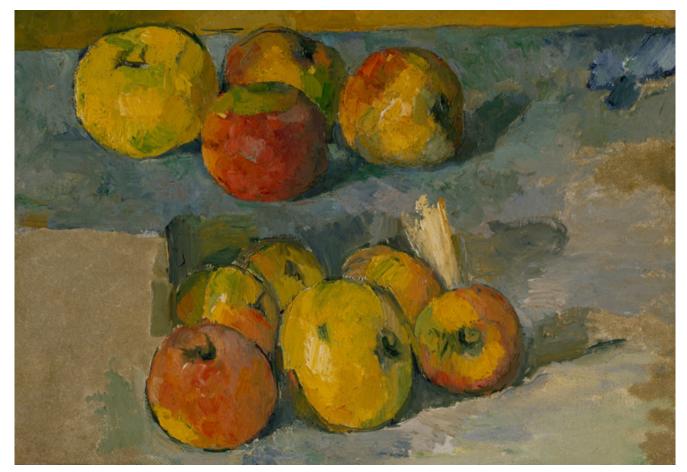
On the Front

by **Susan Shea** (November 2023)



Apples, Paul Cézanne, 1878-79

On the Front

You asked me to come to your office to speak with your student in crisis even though we had the same training

you told me I never got nervous you told me I could handle it better

I wanted you to feel safe, to believe experience would make wartime easier

so you only saw me sitting in front of one mouth speaking, but I was swallowing generations of hostilities, a stampede of piercing wild wounded families whose truths had just escaped from their zoos by word of one mouth

God gave me words to build a soft corral, to slow some running down

to fetch some food some drink to begin some ways of sanctuary

for you for them for me to have a taste of our serenity

Ins and Outs of Analysis

While I was examining apples through their plastic bag, trying to outsmart, leave bruised and battered fruit behind

I saw a woman grab a sour apple Granny Smith bag from my sweet Gala apples section without even looking at her bag

so I had to call out, warn her hey, that's a Granny Smith bag

and without looking at me she said an apple's an apple

leaving in no hurry

leaving me to
analyze her
mindless tranquility

Last Stop Before Heaven

My daughter runs a full-service scar wash of her own invention

she cleanses people of their wrongs, their slights, their chains they drag behind them from unfavored times when love was no where to be seen

she finds a way to lift them up onto pedestals, all polished, speckless with only their customized gifts featured

she spotlights them in her literary journal stories, making them look like heroic figures history needs order to flourish into better times

she prepares them to be valued in ways they have been waiting for all of their truly sorry mortal lives

Table of Contents

Susan Shea is a retired school psychologist who was raised in New York City, and is now living in a forest in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Since she has returned to writing

poetry this year, her poetry has been accepted in a few dozen publications, including Feminine Collective, Ekstasis, Persimmon Tree Literary Magazine, and The Avalon Literary Review.

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