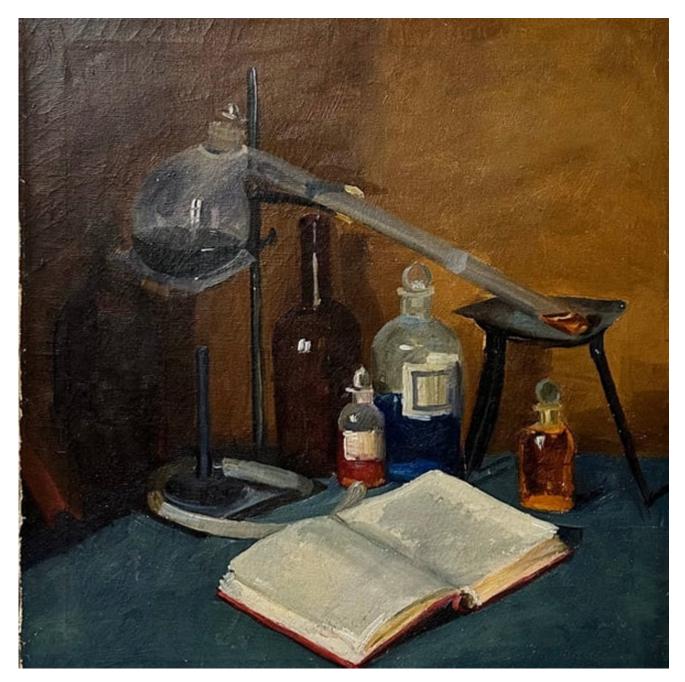
The Pressure to Deform

by **Sheila Murphy** (January 2025)



The Pressure to Deform

Monkey-see, C-suite monkey see-saws from one wrong answer to another fresh from the table

of random numbness scrambling to the front a font of splitsecond gesture toward lifechanging circumstance, not to be confused with romance, near weeds of dubious breed all skittery with birth selfreplicating in the surf-waft blemishing the house paint splurged against the building by the chemistry teacher on summer break missing his beakers, flasks, Bunsen burners, and pipettes. Notoriety needs an audience reported as weight rather than by number, "a ton of people." The inhabitants of the home have not much in common except the skin of the house now being touched up to last for years of seasons, the oncoming fall with masses of mood leaves destined to stain the white now viewable in the momentary sun made rich for the waking hours as far from Waikiki as a gaggle of defragged bits disguised as one big happy fam slammed into a frame.

I Need to Be Far from You to Still Love You in that Split Infinitive Spray of Muscular Language

Why don't you join a monastery and embrace the vow of silence, I say to myself shelving mainstream culture's raw culture like kefir, a constant cloud just loud enough to interrupt the flow of loss indigenous to worldly floss see-through far from the sea of seedlings with invisible names.

I tame myself by way of staves containing the containment of unasked for tones wracked with requisite intonation to discard on cue. I loom to myself I hum soon enough for the daily rooster whose caw smarts pre-dawn across the strangely zoned lawns and stables and barns.

If there is a hell my father never believed in, how is it that preaching stretches always toward over-reach like a furnace pumped with coal, to spoil the home of all of us a ruckus constantly trained to char the brain. How does my brain leech from my heart and nothing within the sense of hearing jar the otherwise polished windows with a quake we only believe we hear there is a tuning fork, unblemishing every caring year we have lodged before us as if what light flight scents upon the even oven line of aloneness as meditation teaches one to cry silently and preferably not at all?

I press my temples and bask in the asking price for health and homing, if you can imagine sorghum-free savory spree of wounded words approaching perfect affection disguised as solitude.

Odd Couplets

From the rafters, something expected. What license You showed although recall I never asked.

I never asked for your perspiration or your chops. Living in proximity meant half dying. The strain of impending depth perception hurt. I blurted out nothing except on paper.

Paper mirages filled the soon full house. Did I say home; I intended house.

You have housed my indignation at least once. Now I spar with ghosts living and gone.

Or you might proclaim my mind hell and gone. It's time to set the record sugar-cured.

A third of life, already sweet with sleep. From the rafters the unexpected upkeep.

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Sheila E. Murphy is an American text and visual poet who has been writing and publishing since 1978. She is the recipient of the Gertrude Stein Award for her book *Letters to Unfinished J.* (Green Integer Press, 2003). She was awarded the Hay(na)ku Poetry Book Prize from Meritage Press (U.S.A.) and xPress(ed) (Finland) in 2017 for her book *Reporting Live from You Know Where*, 2018. She currently lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

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