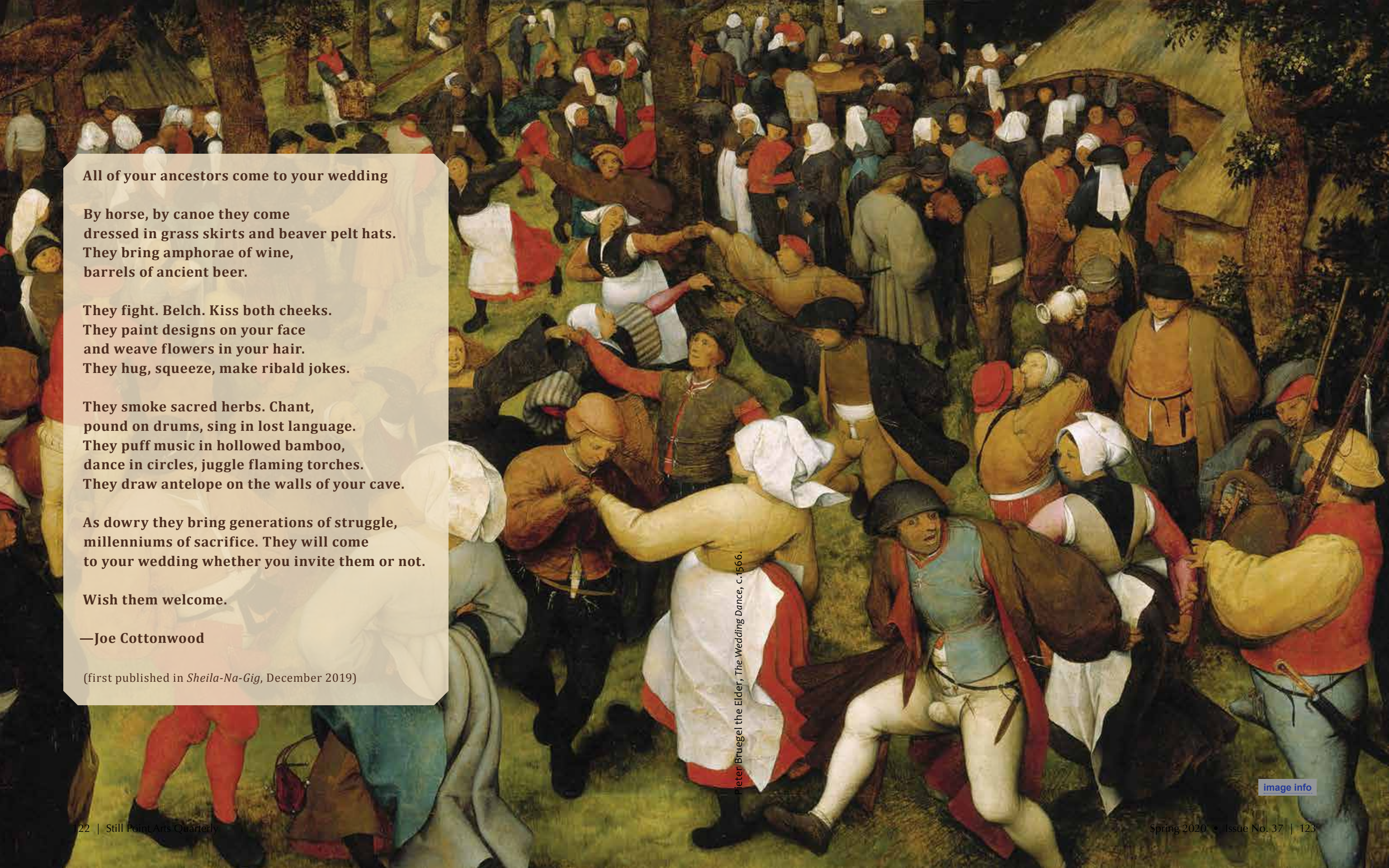




**All of your ancestors come to your wedding**

**By horse, by canoe they come  
dressed in grass skirts and beaver pelt hats.  
They bring amphorae of wine,  
barrels of ancient beer.**

**They fight. Belch. Kiss both cheeks.  
They paint designs on your face  
and weave flowers in your hair.  
They hug, squeeze, make ribald jokes.**

**They smoke sacred herbs. Chant,  
pound on drums, sing in lost language.  
They puff music in hollowed bamboo,  
dance in circles, juggle flaming torches.  
They draw antelope on the walls of your cave.**

**As dowry they bring generations of struggle,  
millenniums of sacrifice. They will come  
to your wedding whether you invite them or not.**

**Wish them welcome.**

**—Joe Cottonwood**

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Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Wedding Dance*, c.1566.

[image info](#)