

## Two Poems by Nan Ottenritter

### Of Place

—We are first in place, then of it.

1

Germans are of place, she said. Yes, one may marry and move, but once one locale is exchanged for another, we return to miraculously clean windows, swept stoops, white-laced curtains, greenhouse tomatoes—all alive as yeast in the oven, embrace in the bed. Flowers of red, purple perch on the sill, cascade down uneven Medieval stone walls.

2.

In today's before-time, we plowed through the land, noticed only when it scraped a shin or offered up a cool sip of water from between moss-covered rocks, a liquid gem amongst slippery mounds of danger. Slowly, as the tree ringed itself and humus pressed, we noticed a waft of green, the song of the jay.

3.

Our middle-time yard now blooms raised beds, compost with egg shells and coffee grinds. We nourish new-found progeny, protect them from aphids and cabbage worms, water in the morning, visit at day's end, pull a weed, say a prayer. We compliment our neighbor's squash, their new puppy's romp. They sip our wine, share time.

4.

In quarantine we are more of place than ever. We walk the neighborhood, searching the sameness for something more. Kids tear up and down the streets on their bikes, little bands of marauders pillaging difference. Our patio guests compliment the crape myrtles, serenity of cut grass and potted plants. We live in place, gently becoming of it as we await the after-time.

### These Days

It's too late to rebalance my portfolio,

attend a performance of Wagner's Ring Cycle, an SNL filming,  
mass at Notre Dame,  
hike Machu Picchu, walk the Columbia Ice Fields during a Jasper-Banff bike ride,

eat stinky tofu at a night market in Taipei,  
scrub an elephant in the waters of Nepal's Chitwan National Park,

be kissed by the mist on the Cape of Good Hope,  
mush to the Arctic Circle, glide along the canals in Venice,

wave to a family of squid along the reef,  
toss a horseshoe crab back into the Delaware Bay,

conduct a chorus, chant with others at Mont St. Michele,  
write a poem like Mary Oliver, a musical like Hamilton,

make tons of money and then give it away.

These sequestered days, I appreciate the have-dones,  
adjust the what-I-have-left-to-dos, all the while

holding a magical dream or two in my back pocket.