

### **About the Author**

Meryem Yildiz is a poet, translator and visual artist born and based in what is colonially known as Montreal. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *carte blanche*, *The Malahat Review*, *Labyrinth Anthologies* and *Flaneur Magazine*, amongst others. She is the winner of *The Malahat Review*'s 2022 Far Horizons Award for Poetry. As a hybrid bird, she feels most at home in liminal spaces.

# SHELTERING PLACE

MERYEM YILDIZ

i have a large kitchen island.

friends have commented on it behind my back.

“such a large kitchen island, gone to waste.”

i wouldn't say i misuse it. there are salads, the occasional soup—meals of leafy greens and powerhouse vegetables to keep me safe or, at the very least, provide me with the illusion of protection from a sense of unease locked in disease.

i wash a kale leaf in the sink, press my thumb on the stem, release it of any dirt.

*keep everything clean*, i think, though i wish for soil underneath my nails, some kind of proof that this body ever touched the earth.

i watch as lumps crumble, fall and disappear into the water.

their path is one i cannot trace with a finger.

kale came to me by way of the mediterranean coast, thousands of years ago.

my father was of the same sea, but he left so i could i grow up by a river whose current carried wide fragments of ice downstream. as a child, i watched them float by, dreaming of a life of carefree sailing on wandering islets made of snow.

now, the year opens like a sign, ready for iterations.

i remember this as i wrap myself in the kale's curling leaf, ground my fingers underwater in a stream of vanishing earth, and anchor in for months of stillness and waiting.

kale can withstand the cold.

we'll survive the journey.

# HUNGER FOR THE DIVINE

MERYEM YILDIZ

memory is a spirit caught in the low tide  
and my mother's voice quick to warn,  
"you can only adore god."

but what if the moon's pale white belly  
were as deserving of my one beating heart?

as a woman grown it is easy to forget  
how in the small of my lungs  
i treasured a lone cooing dove,  
sometimes  
even adored it.

when someone i love enters the room,  
let it be a long silk robe that i wear  
as i wade through their waters.

what i mean to say is that we all need  
another sun, clover honey, a breath of holy.



# ÎLE-AUX-TOURTES BRIDGE PARTIALLY REOPENED FRIDAY MORNING, ADDITIONAL LANE OPENS MONDAY

MERYEM YILDIZ

metro doors are heavy and no one wants to touch them.

i slide outside like a sheet, sit on a slab of concrete and watch cars line up for food that's fastly served, food to be balanced on laps, food for the carousel joyride, the merry go 'round and 'round and 'round we go.

an old brown man sits next to me, drinks his canadian coffee. i wait. he's company.

in my phone, a cackle of women squeal about meat and men while my partner's partner reminds me of who i will never be.

i look at the brown man, i look at my phone. the city is an island.

i do not notice my brother in the parking lot with his crowning vehicle, sporting utility. if i need to empty my body, now's the time, he says, but i have no need for the thrones of alleged burger kings.

in the backseat, a handful of a boy wakes up from a nap, eyes blinking.

“are you feeling better?”

my nephew smiles and i think, how nice to be asked.

my brother complains about my mother, my father. i, too, ease into the banter, though i wonder if there are other ways we can relate to one another.

my nephew points out train tracks, a yellow crane, a siberian husky popping through a sunroof.

*how are you*, we cannot ask, only whisper, breathe out, hide between other words.

*how are you*, as an idle act, elusive between the lips of those with whom i share blood.

at the house, my niece stands on the porch beaming, surrounded by a cackle of little women squealing, no meat nor men in sight.

"c'est ma tante," she declares, as i kneel to squeeze her in these arms that have never lived but to hold.

we have crossed the river somehow, we have made it here.

in the evening, my brother drives me to the train station. tracks, after all, are safer to follow than broken bridges.

through the window, i point things out to myself: wagons, houses, graffiti. stops with names like, “cedar park” and “pine beach.”

the city is an island, i know.

i had to leave it to make it home.

