

Queen Anne's Lace

By Wally Swist

Every summer a specific species

of wildflower has its season, grows in abandon

to spread across the landscape, fills the meadows

from Mount Pollux to the highway's median strip,

basks in the cracks of broken pavement buckling

along Farmington Avenue in the restaurant district

of Hartford's West End and West Hartford's borderline.

When you cut down two stems of Queen Anne's lace

at Kripaulu in the Berkshire Hills to exhibit elegance

and strength in nature, you are drawn

to the parasol that leans into the coolness

of evening, that nods in the rain, that remains

open beneath the sun and the moon. A whole field

of it is a tapestry of flat white tops that italicizes

the contrast of green meadow grass, sustained

whimsy, silent applause. Walking the rise

at dusk after thunderstorms in our crocs, we slosh

through bedstraw, bladder campion, and fleabane,

one of my hands riding on one of your shoulders,

to look south across the Holyoke Range, then north
toward Pocumtuck and Toby, to watch the spirals

of mist clear the sides of the ridges below

early stars. We do not want to let any of this go:
what can only be spoken through the actions

of our loving, the word made flesh, and our flesh

spoken word; windblown wild carrot that roots
in earth, and whose stalks rock in our summering.

Wally Swist's poems have appeared widely in journals and anthologies, such as Rolling Stone and Yankee Magazine's 60th Anniversary Issue. His latest collection of poetry Mount Toby Poems was published in a letterpress limited edition by Timberline Press. A short biographical documentary film regarding his work In Praise of the Earth: The Poetry of Wally Swist was released by the Emmy nominee-filmmaker, Elizabeth Wilda, through WildArts. He has recently finished writing a full-length play, in two acts, Epistles: A Love Story.