

SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by*

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About this poem:

“Globe”

I wanted to buy a globe, the old-fashioned type, with tarnished brass hardware and a decently smooth spin. Thinking back to globes from childhood—at school, in the library, in private homes—I wanted one for my child to explore: a 3D model of the world, with raised mountain ranges, colorful land masses, and gridded seas.

At some point in my globe search, I heard the opening line of this poem and began to follow its sound patterns into the structure of a sonnet. As I wrote, I thought about how quickly political maps can become outdated, as the names and boundaries of countries shift, or disappear entirely. The very real changes in lives and places might not be clear to us in the features of this model, the globe.

The poem then turns to look at other models, such as words and names—all tools we use to explore and understand our world and everything in it, whether or not we realize how the tools influence our findings.

Globe

The Earth on an axis of brass, tilted back,
spun for the fun of it. For the contrast
of mountains and seas under our fingertips;
for the pastel blur of states whose names will slip

out of usage. As if a typeface could
fix them, or their old grievances find peace
in polygons. We know the globe will yield
some day to the next great framing of space;

will rest in its mesh of meridians
beside the hard-bound lexicon, laid open,
inviting us to navigate between

a grace shared with the crudest of stone tools,
and the gravity of models and names
we hold above revision, and fear to lose.