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A Letter for Wayne Miller (again); or, How You Started Writing Poems

Grant McMillan

A letter for *The Book of Props*, now—again,
sung from your fingertips
of the years passed between
forgetting childhood books and quitting grownup jobs and writing
that first email to Wayne:

*Hi! Just wanted to say that your poems are
amazing and moving and powerful. That is all,
thank you!*

And this new letter, now—
from that liminality that is a graduate
teaching assistant to sing that taking up literature again—then,
or taking up poetry, again—now,
is familiar and new and never—ever the same.

Because it was Hemingway who taught you,
in odd hours snuck from the office of your grownup job,
to love the keystrokes that sang
letters into language, like a life you could want,
something familiar and new and still free.

But it was Wayne you emailed
at his U of Colorado Denver address,
an email with too many 'ands,' years
ago when you first read his *Book of Props*,
and the fact that he wrote back.

*Thanks so much, Grant—and—
all the best!*

Because that book, those 'props' first sang
to you of the sublime without a single critic
or class or theory to tell you how
it felt when you read
those opening lines from "Sleep Suite,"

*'light striking the faces of passersby'
... light ringing them into existence,*

these lines of light-striking-faces, striking
your face too, ringings that became
a prop to pick up then—
for the first time, to ring you into me,
singing now, for the first time—again.

Grant McMillan is a former accountant who quit his job as an auditor to return to school for an MA in English Literature at Western Carolina University. He is now a second-year English PhD student here at UND and is constantly discovering new things to love about language and writing.