

SUSAN KAY ANDERSON

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Digression

I am a professional beginner  
extending my happiness  
into the field.

Its wide path  
is a volume of no discussion  
no experience.

I tread bewilderment  
with small feet  
and call it us.

## ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

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Susan Kay Anderson created “Digression” from Anna Botsford Comstock’s *How to Keep Bees* (1905). About the poem and the process of composing it, Susan Kay writes:

These are words and phrases I found in the Preface of the handbook. Here are some of my thoughts as I read, variously, in *How To Keep Bees*, a book so complex and technical that reading it caused me to dream and lose track of time and place:

- I am looking for a way into this material. It flirts so much that I find I cannot flirt back and become bashful with the material in *How To Keep Bees*.
- Bees parallel our human civilizations and also transcend them. This handbook attempts to be demure but is wild and unruly.
- Working with *How To Keep Bees* makes me feel more alive.
- This handbook is a sacred text. No wonder my Onkel Hans and Tante Hedel spoke so reverently about the bees he kept in their apple orchard in Germany.

I had to pull myself back from the text and look for what was beside the point of bees and bee keeping because it became overwhelming, kind of like when bees swarm. This got me thinking about a dear friend who died somewhat suddenly after being sick a long time with cancer and about illness during the time of this pandemic. Since I thought I was fairly comfortable with found material because of my first book of poems, *Mezzanine*, which also uses found material, I thought this project would feel the same. The feeling isn’t the same at all. It is almost as if the material found me or was grabbing my attention in a way that mimics its topic: “keeping” or *holding* onto, and “bees” or *being*, being alive.

Susan Kay Anderson is the author of *Mezzanine* (Finishing Line Press 2019) and *Please Plant This Book Coast To Coast* (Finishing Line Press 2021). Her work has appeared in *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Gnashing Teeth Publishing*, *Sleet Magazine*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Voice Lux Journal*, and elsewhere. She also serves as a poetry reader for *Quarterly West* and *Lily Poetry Review*. She lives in Sutherlin, Oregon, and can be found online at [pw.org/directory/writers/susan\\_kay\\_anderson](http://pw.org/directory/writers/susan_kay_anderson).

HERON TREE  
13 October 2021  
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