

KATE FALVEY

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The Three Visionary Girls

With their reddened leaves  
and glossy seed-berries,  
a tuft of samphire  
gathered from the beach,

they toss up the water  
with their stifled laughter, faces  
peeping from the summit of the cliff  
like secrets.

Trailing wreaths of scarlet  
and skeletons of seamen,  
they took wing over the ocean  
and were gone

but they drew closer together  
with a fond and melancholy gaze,  
salt breath polishing pebbles and pearly  
shells of the undiscovered past.

What, then?  
There is a magic in this spot.  
Dreams haunt and flit.  
One rushes straight through,

and all three  
thunder  
as if with rage  
and triumph.

## ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

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“The Three Visionary Girls” was created from “Footprints on the Seashore,” a story in *Twice-Told Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1837). About the poem and the process of composing it, Kate Falvey writes:

Finding and crafting this poem from the gorgeous wordscape of my early love, Hawthorne, was a strangely fulfilling experience. I’ve never attempted the “found” form before and it’s been too many years since I’ve immersed myself in Hawthorne’s world. This was, truly, an immersive experience—and more clever minds than mine might create an interactive installation of some kind from this process.

At first, I had strict enough rules: use phrases in chronological order as I moved through the story. (And choosing a story was nostalgically engrossing.) I quickly dispensed with even this simple dictate when the poem required conjunctions, specific verb forms, pronouns, or punctuation to make even impressionistic sense.

No matter how they are strung together, the charms of Hawthorne’s words—his unmistakable voice and vision—gleam through my stanzas. Working with his words this way felt like painting with his light. It’s now hard to repress the romantic 19th century diction—which, truth to tell, I’ve always listed towards.

I’ll try “finding poems” again as a kind of meditative practice, spending quality time with beloved writers.... Maybe a Bronte mash-up next?

Kate Falvey is the author of *Morning Constitutional in Sunhat and Bolero* (Green Fuse Poetic Arts 2013), *What the Sea Washes Up* (dancing girl press 2013), and *The Language of Little Girls* (David Robert Books 2016). Her work has also appeared in *Plume*, *NonBinary Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Mud Season Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, and elsewhere. She serves as an associate editor for the *Bellevue Literary Review* and lives in Long Beach, New York.

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