no other world at all.

And no one left to stop the song from growing.

It’s been wintered all this time, buried in deep sorrow, stretching back to some Norwegian kings saddened on the throne whose tears grew women from the ground.
Praise for *Ecologia*

With passion and precision, ardor and humor, Whitmanian exuberance and Dickinsonian canniness, Sophia Anfinn Tonnessen’s *Ecologia* springs up from the “wounded place” that is also “holy ground.” I don’t know when I’ve read a debut collection with such panache and such depth. Tracking the poet’s transition, this book discovers tremendous vitality in its gorgeous and invigorating openness to change. Here’s an entirely original contribution to the mosaic of American poetry.

**Peter Campion**, Poet and critic, and author of *One Summer Evening at the Falls* and *Radical as Reality: Form and Freedom in American Poetry*, among other collections

*Ecologia* is truly a study of the home, equally comfortable exploring the room of the body as it is exploring the room of the mind, though the speaker resides in uncomfortable liminality. This first collection of poems by Tonnessen holds a Heraclitan tension on the topic of transition. From shifts of body, to shifts of love, to shifts of work, from shifts of diction and syntax, from shifts of lyricism to the more linear, this collection culminates them eruditely and with inspiring grace.

**David Tomas Martinez**, Poet and author of *Hustle* and *Post Traumatic Hood Disorder*

With earnestness and urgency, *Ecologia* chronicles a transformation, a translation of energy and spirit within the force and fragility of the physical body. The poems process this energy with the momentum of the natural world — a storm surge, a dazed sparrow, *a shadow passing over long grasses*. Tonnessen does not spare us the brutality of rebirth but allows relief in detailing the humor, the eroticism, and the ordinary, delicate beauty of this life. This book reminds us of what it is to inhabit a body, to live with uncertainty, to hurt and to heal, and it resonates with the humble magic of resilience: *And the grace in falling too, as rain comes to rescue. / How many times have I been buried, and come back again?*

**Carey McHugh**, Poet and author of *American Gramophone*
Compass Rose

The wind rose, taking me with it. Lead in the water main, two-week old lavender on the windowsill in the shower, all blue with missing. I was born facing west. A Valkyrie — sword in hand, blue fire & blue fury, high winds and thunderheads — smothered under a century (and more) of grayest skies. I was so lovely in that life. Not many were the men who dared love me. Each of them (they passed) like rain over oceans & yet scarred me, so well that my wings lost every feather, and I became just like them: mortal, lost on earth, writing songs about the widened sky.

Button-downs, subways. The thrum of monotony that lulls waking sleep and wakes the sleeper before morning. Even there they can't stop the heartbeat rattle of the train, a reminder that you were alive, flew on cloud pine.

I was born facing north, a witch and snow goose, dressed thinly because the cold was my cover: queen over my sisters, speaker to the living and the dead. Not many were the men who dared. And the woman who dared, her red-feathered arrows — no, you wouldn't understand. Still I lost every needle of my boughs and fell to earth, studied to make the same magic from words.

Borrowing them for a time, they collect under your fingernails like twilight’s crystal dust. You remember, one day, that you came from somewhere else. I was born facing east. Rode horses & hunted with falcons along the wide plains. The wind rose through the pale grasses, pressed them back like wild hair. Arched my back like arrows to the sky before they fall. And the grace in falling too, as rain comes to rescue.

How many times have I been buried, and come back again?
Stone Fruit

There’s no text to be found:
I searched baking shows, science fiction,
dating apps, graffiti on the walls of public restrooms,
literary theory, and didn’t carry a word from any of them.
Imagine this: a year in color, but you can only remember black and white.
Or this: your touch is the answer to a prayer,
but each answer demands a new prayer that it continue,
can’t be satisfied. Nor can I eat.
Estrogen irritates the walls of my stomach:
I am being hollowed out for a new soul, a second birth,
all that jazz, a woman and a woman who still has to live.

From me comes a knocking sound. And the whistling of wind.

Except I never did live a year in color.
The movement of the waves reckless, sure,
naked on the shore, diving into muddied waters
after a storm.
But that too was a hollowing. A howl.
A storm surge is wordless and when it retreats
it leaves water’s signature.
Drunk memories are that way too:
parched mouth, flickering moments,
collecting recollections until they form a flood collage.
Nor did the dating apps succeed. I write lover and think my girl with the wide-eyed stare, who tells jokes in bed, wanting to feel wanted, a touch that is the answer to a question — if anyone needed me — asked in a letter from my younger self. The answer, I know, is no. Not that they haven’t tried to.

I want to believe the things I say about myself are true, like I am a witch, or a queen of spades and tea lights, I do. The same way I want to travel to Chicago; it means nothing until it’s in my hand, in my mouth, not on the page — beyond the page. Any time I’m whole, I’m also sundered. Any time I say the voice, the gaze — an unlisted phone number, shooting arrows over deep ocean.

Nor can I eat. Not explain why I’m halfway underwater. The note is always different. Sometimes I quote William McKinley’s last words and sometimes Fantastic Mr. Fox. How could anything as satisfied as death contain me anyway? It doesn’t keep down the voices of the dead. So I hold the space in me like this: a wind chime ribcage, a feathered nest for cardinals in snow, the moment of our embrace. How ginger & how warm. No, I can’t eat. These are my funeral rites.
I am wind whistling through the trees.
A storm surge. It plays in my memory.
Through the ages, trying to warn me of something,
though how could I know?
And when I taste the salt water I taste red wine.
I taste the bitterness of argument.

Let’s all take a moment to think what we’d really like to say to our fathers.

Let’s all take a moment to exhale.
That is his air. This is his body.
His hollow space, his arms. Name nothing lest it be destroyed.
Do you know what I mean when I talk about the power of names?
It’s not grandeur or glamor, but
the mundane, diminished, the dimming light
at the end of day, dying ember smothered
with dish water, a poem mangled by a man’s mouth.

So here we are again, you and me.
You have love greater than mine for
fluttering. And I have this.
I go through each door, and don’t mark the way.
If there ever was a pattern,
I don’t want to see it.
Tell me nothing. I may yet change, or be.
In the dark, all mirrors shine crazy and afraid.
Even they don’t know who they hold.
Nor see the lack but sense, instead,
the place where the person should be.
That’s me: I write about singing and fly
into windows, a dazed sparrow at best.
I talk a big game and then, and then.
I hope you can forgive me all this.
Sleep beckons relief.
It wasn’t to be held (accountable) that I started to write,
but to explain what I might feel, to create feeling from
a body of stone, a soured pit, a bitter plum.

There’s no text to be found. Any answers still come through the body,
though it barely speaks,
and when it does, I don’t know the language of its wild things.
I speak in terms of hurt and heal,
not strings and everlasting, not railway tracks into dark forests,
nor evidence of the moon.
No scientist could prove it.
And you couldn’t, either, because it comes down to an echo, a howl,
the cold through spare trees,
the place no one has touched. Not even me:
No, not me, not ever.
Her Name is Red

The time I borrowed from her was wasted in correction. Edits to those late-night feelings and short stories about meetings that end in shared showers, falling water, handwritten notes on the kitchen table. *Stay as long as you want.* But it isn’t meant to last after the end of August, which is to say when life resumes its course, the stern wind of late summer insists, one final time, and we all surrender. I see a mystery in you that’s not mine.

First dates outside the café window, trying to find something to hold onto. This interlude isn’t real, less so even than the space between notes, and pauses in conversation among orchids in the backyard, where the distance of six feet disappears into dappled light. And the afternoons swallowed by the ceaseless creep of autumn. Where are you in that October rain? And whose umbrellas will I — ? At the dog park and bakery below your place. I, a cup of black coffee, longing for sun. Your name is red. Too good to be true.

The undergrads surge back into town, spreading themselves and their picnic blankets sparsely on lawns. Only loving some shadow of the oaks, the undersides of leaves signaling storms each time, the same in each place. Some things really do repeat, eternal recurrences, old men dressed in cargo shorts, with long socks and t-shirts tucked into their belts. Conversations about faith under trees, a stillness to the place. Your name is red. Mine, blue.