

## 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.