

**Faith Is a Cell, Dividing**  
by Penny Molesso

**Poems from the Series “Infinite Branches: Queer Speculative Disability Poetry in Conversation”—Guest Edited by Toby MacNutt. Each entry in this series includes a poem and the poet’s response to another poet in the series.**

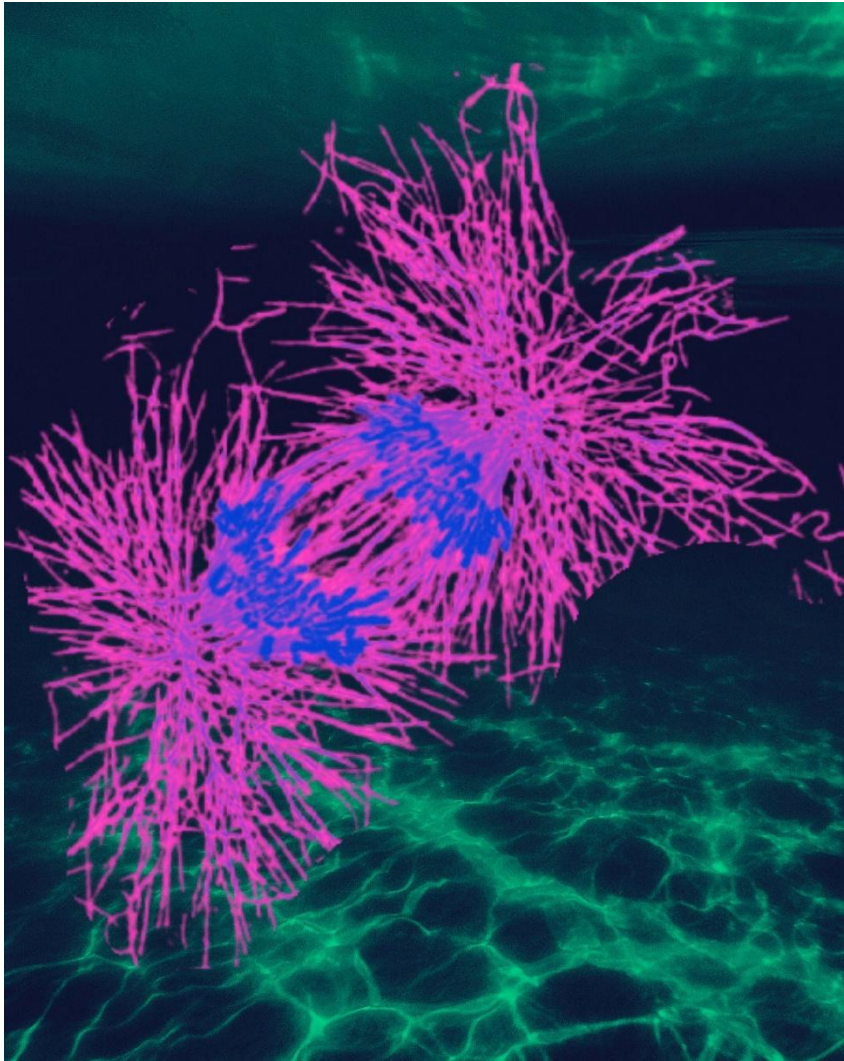


Image by Holly Lyn Walrath, Interstellar Flight Press; Jonathan Borba, Pexels; Nasser Rusan, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, NIH

## Faith Is a Cell, Dividing

You once told me you saw a girl levitate  
above her bed at summer camp.

In a lab, two sound waves suspend a droplet of water in midair.  
You harbor an unshakeable fear of magic.

How am I supposed to tell you  
a daughter can shapeshift into a son?

On your birthday, swans fell through the sky, unspooling  
electric lines. Grandma believed she had swaddled an abyss.

Radios make a great portal for the divine. Great auntie Ruth died  
and her sister heard the transmission of a heavenly choir.

It almost sounded human. In the car, you hum underneath a song.  
The sound moves across me like a cold spirit.

Something glints on the horizon,  
a lake or a flooded field.

On the phone, you try to show me a deer and her babies,  
brown and green pixels twitching into desperate shapes.

Our voices congeal—  
*they've grown frozen breaking up*

Can you feel the insects making the air tremble? My voice  
cracking open, giving birth to a ghost?

Imagine what it feels like to inhabit a body made whole in suspension  
of disbelief.

## Formatting Description

This poem moves in couplets, with the second line of each little stanza indented to the right of its preceding line, resetting to the far left with each change of couplet. When the “voices congeal”, the following line is italicized, its words wide-spaced as if broken.

## Link to Poem on Interstellar Flight Press Website

([LINK](#))

## Author’s Statement on “Faith Is a Cell, Dividing”

I was drawn to the way Mari Ness’ poem “[Ah Yes, the Trick](#)” explored belief through layers of interpretation of what “the trick” can be. Mari’s poem crafts a world that feels naturally haunted and turbulent. This really resonated with me as someone who experiences chronic pain. It’s a familiar frustration to know that my neurological pain is all manufactured by my brain, but that knowledge doesn’t change the fact that my brain has created this very real, very sharp reality for me to live inside of. Mari’s poem makes pain feel palpable; it animates and shapes the world around it. I chose my poem, “Faith Is a Cell, Dividing,” because I noticed a common thread of belief and transformation.

I think my poems tend to reflect how I understand and interact with the world as an autistic person—there are lots of declarative sentences, the supernatural feels literal and ordinary, and ambiguity seeps into the poem through the images’ relationship to one another. To me, this makes truth feel slippery and fluid, and reality capable of leaking. My mom really did see a girl levitate above her bed at summer camp. My grandma experienced post-partum psychosis that made once-unbelievable things true. My poem centers around the questions of: how can I tell someone I love about who I am, and can I make them realize that to know and love me only requires the faith they already have in inexplicable things they don’t expect to understand?

The way belief and faith have the potential to adapt and mutate in my poem felt similar to the way “the trick” is mobilized in Mari’s poem. I understood the trick as something you might do to alleviate pain, that then transforms into this act of tenderness and gentleness with oneself in the midst of pain. There’s something exciting about the way meanings and images in both poems can shift and shimmer and be multiple things at once.

## About the Author

Penny Molesso is a transmedia artist, filmmaker, and writer based in Omaha, Nebraska.  
<https://pennymolesso.com/>

INFINITE BRANCHES  
SPECULATIVE  
QUEER  
DISABILITY  
POETRY  
IN CONVERSATION



**About the Series “Infinite Branches: Queer Speculative Disability Poetry in Conversation” —Guest Edited by Toby MacNutt**

*Infinite Branches* is a round-robin anthology of queer disabled poets. Poets choose their own poems in response to the poet preceding them, and each group of poets concludes with a discussion of their work in the context of each other. Facilitation for choices, statements, and discussion was done by Toby MacNutt.

**Interstellar Flight Magazine** publishes essays on what’s new in the world of speculative genres. In the words of Ursula K. Le Guin, we need “writers who can see alternatives to how we live now, can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine real grounds for hope.” Visit our [Patreon](#) to join our fan community on Discord. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [Instagram](#).