

[Susan Nisenbaum Becker: Three Poems](#) [1]

September 22, 2014 [Featured Poetry](#) [2]

Skate Away

When you can't shake off New York's ashes or fragments of the unwon marathon, when dreary light makes you whisper Kaddish for your father or the man who was your husband, slip a tucked river from your jeans pocket. Unfold its glassy stream etched with clouds, its course stretched and windy, snowy banks and tall, dried grasses, and all the trees, frost sparkled—maple, oak, hickory. Construct the sky's blue umbrella. The crisp, pristine. Tranquil. Keep inserting tranquil as you cut blades across black ice, while you pant billows and wipe ice spray from your face. Try tranquil when you notice a stranger blowing on his fingers or the sun's become obscured or you are rushing to a vanishing point. When your skates bump across the river's heaves—though you smoothed them out the best you could—attempt tranquil again as you jump, blades ringing, and pretend to fly.

Facebook Birthday

It's my birthday I find out this morning greeted by Friends and Friends of Friends prompted by some jovial plexus of well-meaning 0's and 1's not even underground anymore in solidity of cables wending through rock and dirt but in the cloud or even heaven looking down its electronic nose through however many electronic eyes announcing in its inimitable way that I am a winter girl though for these many years I've been a September girl born into that ripe change burnished light snapped air first turtleneck mittening the throat maple leaves crunched underfoot releasing dry fruitiness but now I or someone resembling me or another me or a new me is born in January light its glance and fracture its edge and black slick punch gusts and crystal heaps—I like that too though it isn't me or wasn't but is it now and maybe this is what it means to be reborn born again like a baby getting a pair of winter eyes to squint through slant light reflecting white two winter ears to hear blizzard blasts graupel storms the pines groan and uproot from the collected weight on branches once stretched skyward and a nose to breathe the bitters and yes yes a winter heart that can let the chill in and bear it.



Cake

*One may eat a cake with icing, either straight or sideways.
It will taste sweet either way.
—Sri Ramakrishna*

He made a nest—pillows, blankets
arranged in the hatchback—
while we watched the moon's placid face, shimmery giant,
orange as the flesh of summer melons, float up from the horizon.
Starbright pricked through the August sky
giving into evening, and the last day birds scalloped
paths back to roosts in street maples
looking more like fall aspens, stained
gold by parking lot lamps.

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We stopped our juddering selves,
paused the car over the world's bleeding,
even quit our beyond talk talk
and, risking walkers and strolling cops,
slipped off our pants and kissed, pretending
the sound of passing cars was the sound of the ocean.

Publishing Information

- Sri Ramakrishna quote is from [The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna](#) [3], translated into English by Swami Nikhilananda, originally published in 1942 (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1984).

Art Information

- "[Maple](#) [4]" © kanegen; Creative Commons license.



Susan Nisenbaum Becker's poetry has appeared in many journals, including *Salamander*, *Comstock Review*, *Poetry East*, *Consequence*, *Lumina*, and *Calyx*. She's been a recent featured reader at venues in Boston, Cambridge, Cape Cod, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boulder, Colorado.

A playwright, actor, and arts organizer, Nisenbaum Becker has received several Massachusetts Cultural Council grants. She's been awarded residencies at the Banff Center for the Arts, Yaddo (where she held the Martha Walsh Pulver Residency), the MacDowell Colony, and the Ragdale Foundation. Her work was nominated for a 2012 Pushcart Prize. Her first book, *Little Architects of Time and Space*, was published in 2013 by Word Press.

She is a psychotherapist living in Dedham, Massachusetts, with her partner Alan Albert. For more information, see [Susan Nisenbaum Becker's website](#) [5].

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