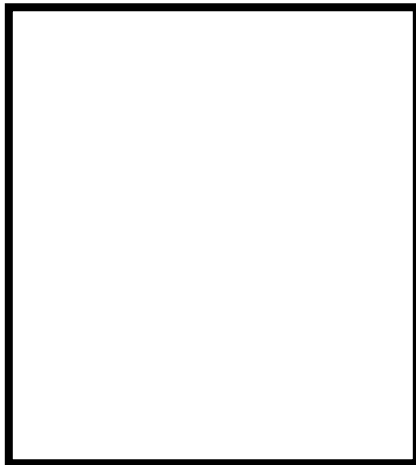


**BREATHE A WORLD (THE BREATHING BOOKS)  
(Tiger Bark Press, 2022)**



**SAMPLE FROM BREATHE A WORLD**

**PATRICK LAWLER WRITES  
ABOUT "PATRICK LAWLER"**



First, Patrick Lawler would never write  
a poem called "Patrick Lawler."  
That's the first thing. The first clue.  
And there's others.  
I mean, he wouldn't be that pretentious.  
That self obsessed. Self-absorbed.  
Narcissistic.

The person who says he is Patrick Lawler

does things that Patrick Lawler would never  
do.

I warn you.  
The Patrick Lawler you know is an impostor.  
The body that surrounds him  
is his, but the insides are not.

The real Patrick Lawler, the one who does  
not  
reside in quotation marks, is being held  
hostage.  
Somewhere. I can assure you there will be  
elegantly written ransom notes  
with onomatopoeia and subtle internal  
rhyme.

Remember the Patrick Lawler  
who was a ventriloquist.  
Remember the Patrick Lawler who stuttered.

Oh, sure, in retrospect, it's easy to see  
how we made the mistake. The fake Patrick  
Lawlers  
looked so much like the real thing. Even  
better.  
They carried a stain of authenticity.

Remember when they had the Win-a-Night-  
with-

Patrick-Lawler Contest. That was a fake  
Patrick Lawler.

At one time or another, we've all been  
fooled.

I must admit I myself have been accused of  
being  
a Patrick Lawler impersonator.

I wish he had done something  
remarkable or even remarkably mediocre  
so there would be more demand for him.  
It's hard to justify the attention.

At the Patrick Lawler Impersonator  
Convention,  
they usually complain about the absence of  
work.

They hate to admit it but sometimes they  
think that there are just too many of them.  
When they look at all the name tags, it  
makes them queasy.

Then there is the rumor that Patrick Lawler  
has given up being Patrick Lawler.

Here's the evidence: If Patrick Lawler  
did not want to be Patrick Lawler,  
then why would he write a poem titled  
"Patrick Lawler"?

Remember the Patrick Lawler Anonymous  
meetings?  
Remember the Patrick Lawler who had lead  
eyes?

Remember the Patrick Lawler who tried to  
use  
crutches for wings? It was as if someone  
were holding him  
underwater. He forgot he had eyes.

The real Patrick Lawler's life became  
dependent  
on the Patrick Lawler impersonators.  
They began to live his life in more  
meaningful  
ways than he himself had ever lived it.

There was no single, solitary, existential,  
autonomous  
Patrick Lawler. Like emergent properties.  
Like birds.  
Like weather. Like a collection of hats.  
Consciousness  
of the whole was more important than the  
single self.

You always know if it is him because he  
stands in front of you--  
sometimes silvery, sometimes in slow  
motion--  
and he tries to convince you as if it is the  
most  
significant fact he can possibly share with  
you.

"This 'person' in front of you," he says, "is  
*not* Patrick Lawler."