

HARTS

& Minds

EARTH AND FIRE

Susan Weaver

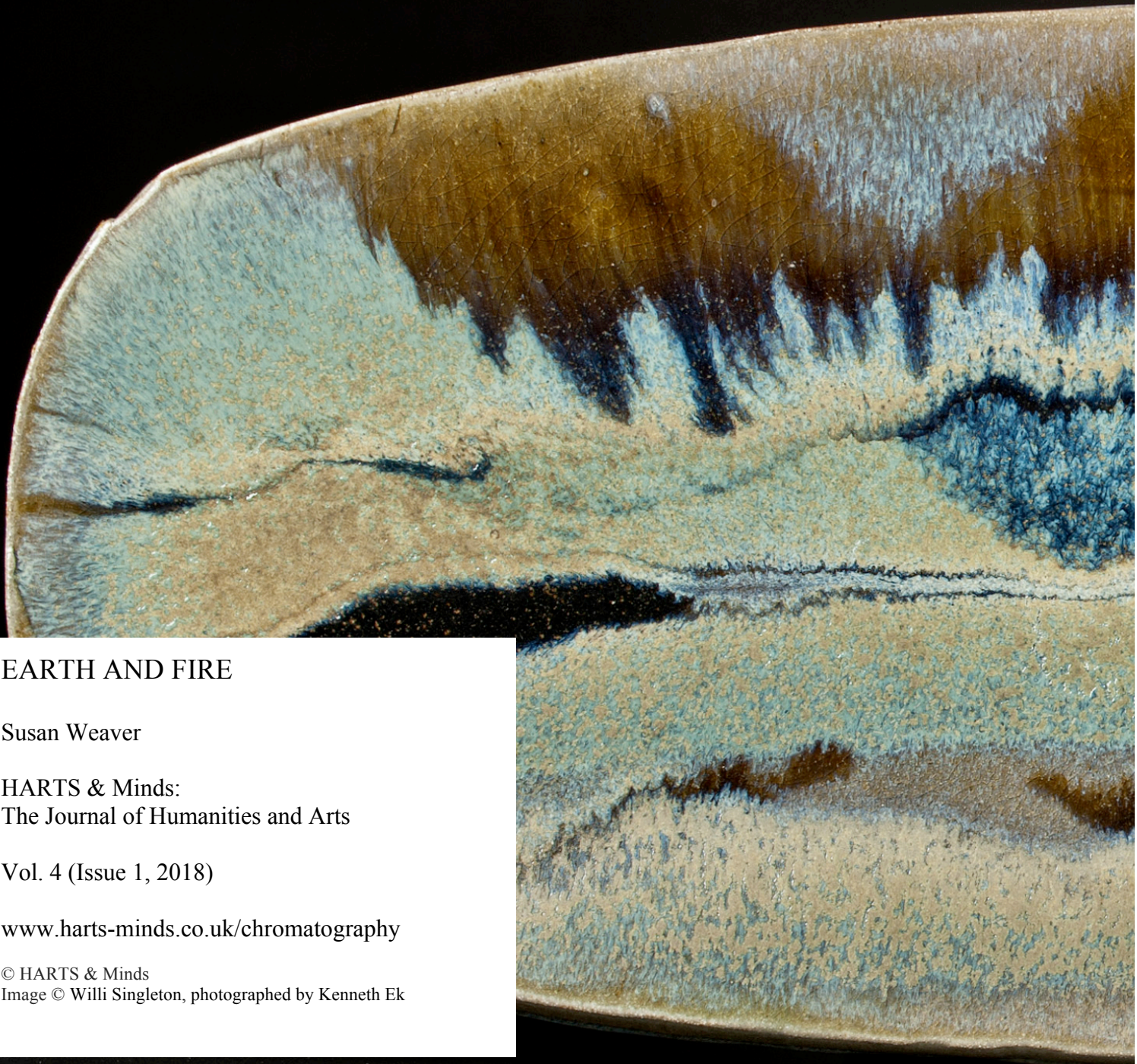
HARTS & Minds:
The Journal of Humanities and Arts

Vol. 4 (Issue 1, 2018)

www.harts-minds.co.uk/chromatography

© HARTS & Minds

Image © Willi Singleton, photographed by Kenneth Ek



Earth and Fire

Susan Weaver

Near Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania's hills and farm fields pulse with rhythm. The Blue Mountains undulate above furrow-stripped fields that change with the seasons from emerald to tawny to rust.

Willi Singleton lives with the landscape on Hawk Mountain Road in a white frame house that had been his grandparents'. His pots owe much to materials the land provides.

thawing clay
top of Hawk Mountain
the potter's adze bites deep
whistling, he turns his back
on winter

I cycle these lanes – Red Church, Donat's Peak, Kistler Valley Road – measuring their rise and fall with heart, lungs, legs. I memorize landmarks. Silos, one-room schoolhouses, a small sign for Pine Creek Pottery beside the road.

throwing on the kick wheel
harmony of hand
and foot
heel to toe, heel to toe
natural as breathing

I met Willi by coincidence. A friend invited me to a firing. He does it the ancient Japanese way, with wood, in a four-chambered kiln that climbs his hillside. That night his smile, his helpers' banter welcomed me.

Now I assist, fire roaring in my ears.

full moon –
every few minutes
braving the dragon's breath
stick by stick we feed
*noborigama**

In a small gallery next to Willi's kitchen, I marvel at cups, platters, bowls. The colors of his landscape breathe, born of the natural glazes he makes, the spray of ash from burning wood, the alchemy of fire. His pots speak my feelings about the land, my feelings about blue.

But his glazes are unforgiving. If the temperature is off, the pot may be underfired, or the glaze runs.

I yearn to paint
with words
earth and sky
as the potter does

risking all

* traditional “step-climbing kiln”

This tanka prose piece was previously published in *Ribbons* (journal of the Tanka Society of America), Fall 2016, Vol. 12, No. 3. Rights have reverted to the author.

Biography

Susan Weaver lives in Allentown, Pennsylvania. A former journalist, she writes tanka and free verse poetry inspired by life experiences and the arts, including paintings by her husband, Joseph C. Skrapits. Her poems have appeared in literary journals and the anthologies *Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania*, *Earth: Our Common Ground*, *Fifty Women Over Fifty*, and *Unexpected Harvest: A Gathering of Blessings*. She is tanka prose editor for *Ribbons*, the journal of the Tanka Society of America.