



Saturday, October 2 • 12:00 PM

“A Soul Admitted to Itself” Solitude, Sociability, and Poetry

Connecticut state poet laureate, Margaret Gibson, author of the recent collection of poetry *The Glass Globe*, and memoirist and novelist Fenton Johnson, author of *At The Center of All Beauty: Solitude and the Creative Life*, explore the solitary world of poets and writers and look at their work in this time of self-discovery.

It's been a year and more of what is called “social distancing,” and what that means for how we now understand our being together and our being apart is an open question. Have we gained, perhaps, a greater recognition of an essential solitude? Have we found ourselves closer to nature or thrown back onto resources we did not know we had? Or have we discovered, conversely, that social distance in an age of digital communication guarantees nothing, and solitude perhaps least of all? What is a poem, a painting, a novel that lets it open the greatest inwardness to sheer publicness and to the transformation of lives given over to its terms?

Fenton Johnson is emeritus professor at the University of Arizona and serves on the faculty of the creative writing program at Spalding University. In addition to *At the Center of All Beauty*, his works of fiction include *The Man Who Loved Birds*; *Scissors, Paper, Rock*; and *Crossing the River*. In nonfiction, Johnson has published *Geography of the Heart: A Memoir* and *Keeping Faith: A Skeptic's Journey among Christian and Buddhist Monks*. He is a regular contributor to *Harper's Magazine* and has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Margaret Gibson is the author of *Not Hearing the Wood Thrush*, *Broken Cup* (a finalist for the 2016 Poets' Prize), *The Vigil: A Poem in Four Voices* (a finalist for the National Book Award), *Long Walks in the Afternoon* (a Lamont Poetry Selection), and most recently *The Glass Globe*. The recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a Pushcart Prize, and editor of *Waking Up to the Earth: Connecticut Poets in a Time of Global Climate Crisis*, Gibson was named the poet laureate of Connecticut in 2019. She is professor emerita at the University of Connecticut.