

An abstract painting featuring a large, vibrant orange and red shape at the top, resembling a setting or rising sun or a large flame. Below this, a horizontal band of lighter, hazy colors suggests a sky or atmosphere. The bottom half of the image is dominated by a deep blue and purple wash, representing water. Silhouettes of people are scattered throughout: some are in the upper right, appearing to be on a shore or in a boat; others are in the lower left and right, appearing to be in the water or on a distant shore. The overall mood is contemplative and ethereal.

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WHERE  
OUTSIDE  
THE BODY  
IS THE SOUL  
TODAY

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MELISSA KWASNY

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"I can't shake the feeling that this work is haunted by the spirits of the living earth. Revelatory and resplendent, *Where Outside the Body Is the Soul Today* is an altar to a higher vision, an elegant meditation fastened to both the inconceivable and the conceivable, the immortal and the material world."

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"Kwasny gives us here the book our age most desperately needs—a book that searches through the self for all the ancestors, all the dead, which makes of violence not despair but threshold to radical repair—a book that asks, what is the soul? And the soul is no possession. It is instead what we are possessed by. And the soul isn't one thing, but all things, everything, from the herd of mule deer wary at our own presence, to the soil that bears the plants that bear the seeds the goldfinches feed on, and yes, the soul is those goldfinches, too."

—DAN BEACHY-QUICK, author of *Circle's Apprentice*

"Kwasny has a rare lyric intelligence that can illuminate the most complexly layered quest for understanding without attempting to simplify its parts. These poems never shrink from the most intricate and difficult questions that we, as humans, face."

—RUSTY MORRISON, author of *Whethering* and *After Urgency*

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MELISSA KWASNY

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*To Bryher*



*The greater part of the soul is outside the body.*

—MICHAŁ SĘDZIWIÓJ



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WHERE  
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## THE HIDE AND SKIN HANDBOOK

The book begins, rightly, with the Killing Floor. A pig has skin that most resembles ours, having no membrane between it and its *flesh and blood*. The skin must be cooled, the heat of life in it. One must put away the vodka, the salt. Whether smooth skinned or blue feathered or shining with fur, underneath each of us, gristle and brine. Aging, the hair slip on the cowhide. Swelling knees, our scars, our tattooed stains—each year so long we find ourselves confronted with it. Sitting in the dirt becoming mud of the sweating house. Windows of the body, how to clear them? The Yupiit break the ice from the waterholes so the sea mammals can see them. Wild orchids seed in clutches under the fir, facing east. We look forward to silk and trees, to the court life. Snow melts. Sun rises, as if under a spell.

