

Dear Poets,

Today's teaching takeaway, Emily Wolahan's "Tansy," appears in [Anti-Heroin Chic](#), courtesy of persona and the chloroplast.

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How It's Put Together

Bookended in italics and botanical facts—lines three through eight's expansion / retraction, petal-shaped—the first half evokes a seed packet.

*Tanacetum vulgare*

ASTER FAMILY

4'. Many tiny, button-like yellow flowers in dense clusters; rays minute, barely visible around large disk. Leaves dark green, fern-like, tripinnately compound; aromatic when crushed. CAUTION Poisonous. BLOOMS Aug.–Sept. HABITAT Roadsides, ditches, pastures.

Iambs as prima nutrient, followed by size and optic stats, a second simile-hyphen, plant diction then a scent detail. WARNING and a LIFECYCLE. Non-greenhouse ABODES.

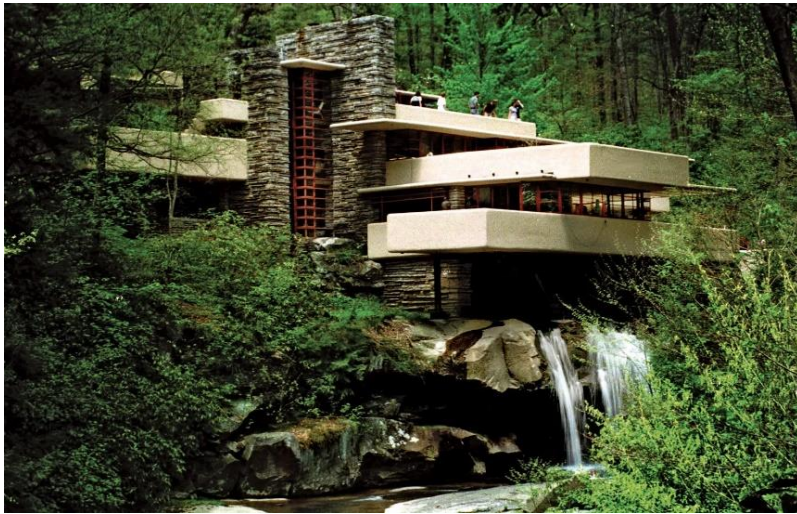
Note the floating declaration that funnels into "Tansy's" second section, pronouns its maypole.

*You  
did  
not  
injure  
me.*

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Wolahan's lineation in the second half, reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater.





Thrumming on the street just beside where  
I am trapped multiphasic, multifocal,  
multi-bound to the slap of ash in air.

The fire cannot jump this road—  
until the fire jumps this road.

Layout: planks craning in one- and two-syllable soil, save for “multiphasic, multifocal, / multi-bound.” *Slap* deeds physicality to *ash*, the couplet’s line break serving as flame median.

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My answer is left off the static page.

Is spread, barely visible pulling energy  
to its heart. *You* placed the paper on the embers

with an ease that *did not* cease until  
the show was over. Smoke rose. False snow

Our narrator: an imprisoned, wisdom-withholding flower intuiting conflagration. New-age photography adherents will appreciate “barely visible pulling energy / to its heart” for the [Kirlian](#) implications. Wolahan demonstrates how the right synonym reifies rather than recycles an image, *page* becoming *paper*, *embers* nuancing *ash*. We have the piecemeal return of part one’s message (*You did not . . .*) configured as a triangle surrounded by rhyme—

*You*

ease that *did not* cease

—this segment completed by fumes and faceted ember (“False snow”).

===

blurs edges between solid and immaterial,  
somewhere between *injure*  
and nurture. You keep on leaving your mark.

Whorl me, disintegrate me, crumble *me* up.  
Take me in your mouth. I taste rich.

A standoff “somewhere between *injure* / and nurture,” *You* and *your* supplement the winner: indelibility. The commands begin with *Whorl*, which my ears hear as W-H-O-H-R-L, not unlike *rural* into R-U-R-L-E. *Whorl*’s tendency is to pair with fingerprints, so its sidestep adds further brutality to *crumble* and *disintegrate*. Don’t mourn. Vengeance—this is a poisonous plant monologue—and the confidence of a three-word sentence complement “Tansy’s” final line, the poem’s craned-most plank.

### Prompt

Follow Wolahan’s packet-and-persona approach. Consider paint pigments or a powdered drink as starting points. Using synonyms and commands, change our concepts of your chosen item’s capabilities. Float, funnel, and configure a declaration. Is there anything visually [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) about your piece?

Happy Poeming,

Jon