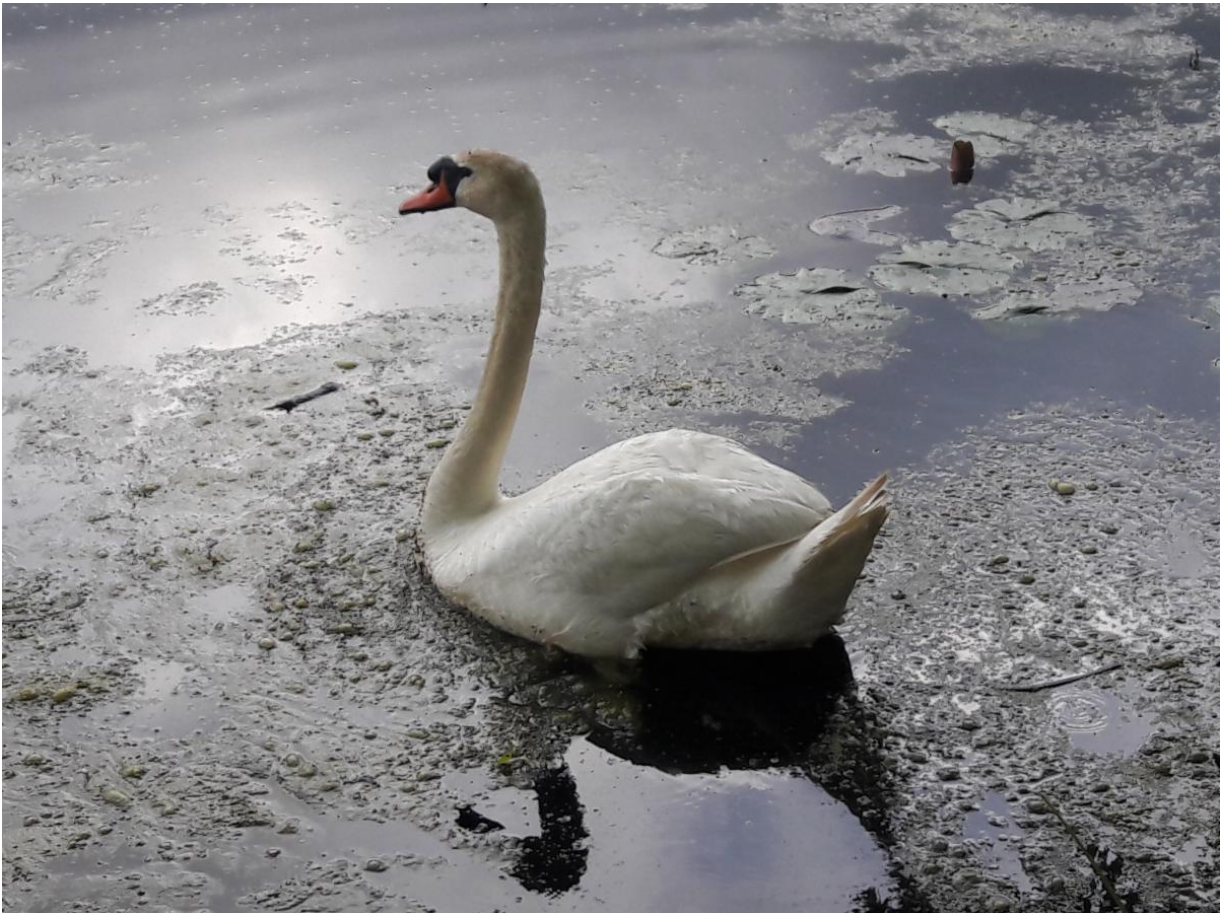


February 2024

Upcoming Events, Progress on the New Book, and a Question for You



Waiting for Spring

Weather in New England is a capricious thing. It was 57 degrees and sunny yesterday, my daffodils are poking through the leaf cover, and the swans are looking for love at the wildlife refuge in

my town. But tomorrow, the temperature will plummet and we are keeping fingers crossed that we won't see a blizzard. It's been known to snow in April around here.

Whatever the weather, I'm holed up in my "writer's cave," a place both actual and metaphorical, as I continue to work on my latest novel, *Paint the Wind*. I'm offering a sneak peek in this month's letter, which I hope will entertain you.

An Excerpt from *Paint the Wind*

An Introduction to the Story

In early 20th century Vienna, fifteen-year-old Maya Sircos, the sheltered daughter of the Greek merchant Aristophanes Sircos and his Austrian wife, Marie-Elise, first meets the young artist Andreas Brenner when she is sitting for the portrait her father has commissioned Brenner to paint. Infatuated by the intense and charismatic artist, Maya's daydreams propel her to a sense of herself that Brenner's finished portrait has informed. Over the remaining years of her adolescence, she becomes the woman Brenner had foreseen in the painting.

By the time she enters university at nineteen, Maya is a self-assured and outspoken student of art history with an unusual and angular beauty that is striking in the midst of the fair-haired and dimpled Viennese society in which her family moves. A chance meeting with Brenner during a heated discussion with fellow art students one afternoon at a café leads Maya back into the artist's life, when she agrees to model for him.

Woman in a Red Dress

I DIDN'T TELL MY PARENTS. Although I still lived under their roof, my daily comings and goings as a university student were my own business. But I also knew they would be horrified to think I was posing as a model for an artist—even Andreas Brenner.

I arrived at his studio shortly before eleven. I have my mother's sense of time—not my father's. The early fall air had been brisk and I had relished the walk, my curiosity mounting the closer I got to Brenner's neighborhood. I was enjoying the idea of myself as the object once again of his acute observation, his intense scrutiny. No longer the tentative adolescent struggling to define herself as a woman, I was looking forward to meeting Brenner on more equal footing.

The building was relatively new, and saturated with light from tall, floor-to-ceiling windows. I rode the elevator to the top floor and stepped into a sky-lit room. A tile stove in the center emanated a welcome heat. Three or four easels supported canvases in various stages of completion—all formal, conventional portraits for which he'd become known. The warmth of the air in the room heightened the odors of linseed oil and turpentine, mingled with coffee and tobacco.

Brenner was arranging pillows on a divan that had been draped with a shawl embroidered with flowers in deep colors of magenta and yellow.

I waited in the doorway, absorbing what I had only imagined years before. When he turned from his task, I greeted him.

“Good morning.” I extended my hand.

He strode across the room, appraising me as he walked.

“Welcome. I see that this time, you weren't afraid to accept my invitation to my studio.”

So he *had* recognized me. I wrestled with whether his knowing who I was when he asked me to model for him should be a warning to me. I admit, I'd been flattered that he'd found me interesting enough to paint back at the café. But now I suspected another motive behind the invitation and it made me uneasy.

[READ MORE](#)



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John Reinhard Weguelin,
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Upcoming Events

March 2, 2024

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Artsy Fartsy Artists and Authors Fair

Pleasant View Senior Center

328 N Main Street

East Longmeadow, MA 01028

April 20, 2024

Time and Location TBD

Memoir Writing Workshop

Presented by

National Organization of Italian American Women

Boston, Massachusetts (If you would be interested in attending a

2.5 hour workshop on writing a memoir,

please **contact me** and I'll send you the details.)

A Question for You

Would you like the option of purchasing my books directly from me on my website rather than from a retailer (online or bricks-and-mortar store)?

I am considering setting up an online bookstore for my books and would appreciate your thoughts.

May Spring be coming to your part of the world soon!

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