

## James B. Nicola

### Before Language

Because there is language  
we have the word Here.  
And because there is Here,  
There.  
Which may be what I can see that's not Here,  
what is by you, not by me:  
or what is by neither of us  
but can also be beyond all I see:  
Imagination.

But once upon a time, before language,  
there was no here and there,  
nor now and then,  
nor you and I,  
only us  
as ever  
as one.

And when we are silent  
together  
I start  
to remember  
a time  
like that—  
or, rather,  
like this—  
or both,  
as ever,  
as one.

**James B. Nicola's** poetry and prose have appeared in *MRPR*; the *Antioch*, *Southwest*, *Green Mountains*, and *Atlanta Reviews*; *Rattle*; *Barrow Street*; *Tar River*; and *Poetry East*, garnering two *Willow Review* awards, a Dana Literary award, and six Pushcart nominations. His full-length collections are *Manhattan Plaza* (2014), *Stage to Page* (2016), *Wind in the Cave* (2017), *Out of Nothing: Poems of Art and Artists* (2018) and *Quickening: Poems from Before and Beyond* (2019). His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a *Choice* award. He is facilitator for the Hell's Kitchen International Writers' Roundtable, which meets twice monthly at Manhattan's Columbus Library: walk-ins welcome.