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We also thank our subscribers around the world.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF OUR 2020 WRITING CONTESTS!

Final Judges:

Kimberly Blaeser, Joy Harjo Poetry Prize
Amina Gautier, Rick DeMarinis Short Story Prize
Fenton Johnson, Barry Lopez Nonfiction Prize

FIRST PRIZES, $1200 plus publication

“The Way Things Are Going in Liberty, Utah,” by Sunni Wilkinson of Ogden, Utah, Joy Harjo Poetry Prize

“Speak to me of Love” by Linda Lucero of San Francisco, California, Rick DeMarinis Short Story Prize

“Legally Speaking, Rats Aren’t Even Animals” by Timothy DeLizza of Baltimore, Maryland, Barry Lopez Nonfiction Prize

SHARED SECOND PRIZES, $250 plus publication

“Heaven” by Tina Carlson of Santa Fe, NM, and “Fire Season with Rolling Blackouts at the Bodega Bar & Grill” by Susan Cohen of Berkeley, California, Joy Harjo Poetry Prize

“We Threw Them Away” by Ruby Murray of Cathlamet, Washington, Rick DeMarinis Short Story Prize

“Last Sweat” by Richard Hague of Cincinnati, Ohio, Barry Lopez Nonfiction Prize

HONORABLE MENTIONS, publication

“Before The Mother” by Jed Myers of Seattle, Washington, Joy Harjo Poetry Prize

No Honorable Mention was given for the 2020 Rick DeMarinis Short Story Prize

“A Moment to Breathe” by K. Ka'imilani of Hilo Hawaii and “The Moral Imperative to Regenerate American Communities—Marlon Foster” by Stephen Erickson of Culver City, California, Barry Lopez Nonfiction Prize

FINALISTS 2020 Joy Harjo Poetry Prize

"The Devil Is Beating His Wife," Matt Hohner, Baltimore, MD
"Kapok Tree: An Abecedarian Ghazal," Jen Karetnick, El Portal, FL
"Bohemian Rhapsody," AE Hines, Portland, OR
"This Morning After The Riots," AE Hines, Portland, OR
"Triptych for an Artist," Terry Blackhawk, Hamden, CT
"Heaven," Tina Carlson, Santa Fe, NM
"Suddenly Winter," Sheree La Puma, Valencia, CA
"Distance," Marcia Hurlow, Olathe, KS
"Teaching High School in the Bronx During Covid 19," Colton Green, Bronx, NY
"Prayer to the Lake Christine Fire," Kelly Slivka, Corvallis, OR
"My Husband Says the Last Mouse is the Lucky Mouse," Andrea England, Kalamazoo, MI
"The Wandering," Connie Post, Livermore, CA
"Nightmare Woman," Robin Scofield, El Paso, TX
"Tommy," Matthew J. Spireng, Kingston, NY
"Coyote On The Side Of The Golden State Freeway," L.A. Johnson, Santa Monica, CA
"Soldierettes In Our Parents," Barb Reynolds, Oakland, CA
"Recall the Hawk," Michael Scheiwe, Marquette, MI
"Taxonomy," Kathleen Tibbets, Arlington, Mass
"Rules When Setting a Scene," Jonathan Greenhause, Jersey City, NJ
"In Times Like These," Tim Raphael, Dixon, NM
"Sticks and Stones," Clare Chu, Palm Springs, CA
"Mexi-Poet in College en América," Manuel Calvillo de la Garza, Ithaca, NY
"Harjwi's Sequence," Gillian Joseph, Charlotte, NC

FINALISTS 2020 RICK DEMARINIS SHORT STORY PRIZE

"The Letter 'H,'" John Sheirer, Florence, Mass
"Lucien's," Clayton Vermuin, Everett, WA

FINALISTS 2020 BARRY LOPEZ NONFICTION PRIZE

"Confessions of an Amateur Ghost Hunter," Ashley Memory, Asheboro, NC
"Date with a Coyote," Whitney Vale, Louisville, KY
"Make Good Choices," Elizabeth Tucker, Truckee, CA
"The Robbery," Sue William Silverman, Grand Haven, MI
"You Can't Live Your Life In A Box," Anne Gudger, Banks, OR
"The Blues," Tammy Delatorre, Torrance, CA

2021 JOY HARJO POETRY PRIZE
BARRY LOPEZ NONFICTION PRIZE RICK DEMARINIS SHORT STORY PRIZE

$1500 1st PRIZE, $300 2nd PRIZE, Honorable Mention

JUDGES

PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY, POETRY

JENN GIVHAN, SHORT STORY

J. DREW LANHAM, NONFICTION

GUIDELINES: Go to **www.cutthroatmag.com** and submit poems and stories through our online submission manager. Submit up to **3 poems** (100 line limit/ one poem per page) or **one short story or one creative nonfiction piece** (5000 word limit/double spaced) in **12 point font**. **NO AUTHOR NAME ALLOWED ON ANY MS.** There is a $23 nonrefundable entry fee per submission. READING PERIOD: **August 31, 2021- November 1, 2021**. **UNPUBLISHED WORK ONLY!** No work that has already won a prize is eligible. No former *CUTTHROAT* prize-winning author may enter the contest he/or she has previously won. Enter as often as you wish. Multiple submissions okay, but we must be informed immediately of acceptances elsewhere. Finalists considered for publication. Winners published in *CUTTHROAT* and announced on our website, in *POETS & WRITERS* and winningwriters.com No relatives of or staff members of *CUTTHROAT* nor close friends, relatives and no students of judges are eligible to enter our contests. See www.cutthroatmag.com for more information. **WE RECOMMEND YOU READ A COPY OF *CUTTHROAT* BEFORE ENTERING OUR CONTESTS.**

WILLIAM YELLOW ROBE, February 3, 1960-July 19, 2021

WE DEDICATE THIS 15TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE TO WILLIAM YELLOWROBE, PLAYWRIGHT AND POET, ENROLLED MEMBER OF THE BLACKFEET NATION WHO PASSED OUT OF THIS WORLD IN JULY 2021. BILL'S POEM, "BREATHE DEEPER," WAS FEATURED IN TRUTH TO POWER: WRITERS RESPOND TO THE RHETORIC OF HATE AND FEAR.

WE DEEPLY MISS HIM.

BREATHE DEEPER

William Yellow Robe

Just but a moment,
brother,
sister,
a moment,
a small breath,
less than a splinter of a fear,
less than a moment of hate,

that breath,
that courage,
rushing into you,
feel it,
enjoy it,
now,
breathe deeper,
slowly,
not out of panic,
but with the motion, of a mother,

your eyes dropping fear from you in tears,
clearing and seeing truth,
the reality that is yours,
the reality you can change,
discard the hate and fear others refuse to own,
replace it with this breath,
your own heart beat,
and begin,
change is not an end,
but a moment,
to create life,
create yours…

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FIRST PLACE JOY HARJO POETRY PRIZE

The Way Things Are Going in Liberty, Utah
Sunni Brown Wilkinson

The mare in Cook’s pasture moves slowly,
lets the wild turkeys by,
that parade of angels whose language

is more fuss than cry. In summer we unbonnet
blackberry stems, drop thumb-sized
berries into an ice cream pail

in my father’s garden that abuts
Cook’s pasture.
They come easy.

I tried so hard
to forgive my mother
for leaving.

Near the house, the roses are heavy
with the weight of themselves.

They can hardly keep up

their heads
until we cut them, take them
away.

Out in the yard
my father cleans
skunk traps — six skunks this month,

and eight raccoons. They come
in the thick, bottomless night
cut through the dark,

graceful as water, surreptitiously
eat cheese, that slippery goodness
on their claws, and then —

the spring and latch.
The rifle.

Hard to kill, the coons
take three to four bullets
and even then thrash and tear

like a woman on fire,
like a woman desperate to get out
of her life.

The skunks, always softer, just spray
and drop into a heap
the color of milk and shadows.

They wanted to savor
what wouldn't last. They wanted sweetness,
not knowing the other side
was loss.

What's the fruit of a whole life?
And do you wait for it
to ripen, or take it at will, even
steal?

The house is for sale but the garden
doesn't know it, unstoppable
in its bruise-colored giving.

Maybe the mare knows best.
Evening, she dips her head
into a barrel full of twilight,
bobs for stars.

SHARED SECOND PLACE, JOY HARJO POETRY PRIZE

HEAVEN
Tina Carlson

1.
The first sorrow is a kind of silence under the sink. Such a dank place to hide, dead spiders like husks of fallen stars.

This is where we meet. She, always making fun of my Spanish. Mountains
all around, sharper than teeth. We swim in the oceans of our mouths.

2.
In the shelter, a girl named Heaven mounts a revolt. She hates the daily prayers, the jowls of the man with nails like claws. She hates that godliness is a minister who pants in her ear,

thin pads on the floor, the women always
crying. Her spine all twisted and tied up.

Heaven says, *dirt is only dirt*. *I have four rooms in my heart bigger than a playground. Take the children out of the man's mouth, out of the cage's endless clanging*.

Generations of silence inside us: births gone backwards into spent eggs.
Her arms lined with cuts and scar. Flags for the missing and lost.

3.
So many sorrows to follow.

Sanctuary: foot rub, hawk call, reservoir of clean water.

Say the body
is a door
and skin
makes immigration impossible.

We were once specks of light, *cielo*.

Horses painted on cool stone in the dark.

SHARED SECOND PLACE JOY HARJO POETRY PRIZE

FIRE SEASON WITH ROLLING BLACKOUTS AT THE BODEGA BAR & GRILL

Susan Cohen

After a week of enforced night,
light breaks over the pool table.
A clack of cues to crack the silence.
All that was perishable is gone
into two dumpsters out back. New,
on a whiteboard behind the bar,
these offerings: Pork belly, salmon,
short ribs, butterscotch pudding with
or without whipped cream. Also,
Everything is free
for fire survivors, first responders,
or anyone who needs it to be.

Generosity is a poem tonight,
the language of kindness to strangers
and gratitude to the volunteers
whose red engines screamed
from the firehouse next door.
No one will argue bumper stickers,
wonder who arrived with gun racks
or rainbow flags, attack a slogan
on someone's sweat-stained cap.
Just walking through the warped
doorway that never keeps the flies out
is a celebration of survival,

a free offer, a feast, a toast
to the shared citizenship of flesh.
Here's to the live and kicking,
those with hungers and with thirsts:
waitresses, barkeeps, cooks,
paying customers (or not),

praying customers (or not),
sooty cows in too-dry hills whose shit
sustains the flies. Here's to the frantic
flies, to all of us, powerless
while flames choose what to burn
in this raging democracy of fire.

HONORABLE MENTION JOY HARJO POETRY PRIZE

BEFORE YOUR MOTHER

Jed Myers

—for the "Naked Athena" of Portland, July 19, 2020

That nakedness we two tykes were allowed
to revel in, hot afternoons in the round
inflatable pool on the lawn, shallow bright
plastic pond our mom firmed up for us
with her magic smoke-scented breaths,

that nakedness of our pallor susceptible
to the sear of the ultraviolet, before
the first bad burn on the Jersey Shore, before
the pleasure of all our splashes and squeals went
quiet inside our embarrassment,

that nakedness we jumped up in to go run
around on the radiant grass, before
we ever felt stripped of a thing—yes I think
it was an age, hazy as it remains
in its blur of elation—it was no dressing-down,

that nakedness. Did the shine on the taut yellow
skin of the pool in the sun seem a touch
lurid to us even then? We had begun
sorting sensations. The water cool
on our legs, bottoms, genitals, something

that nakedness meant, meant again
when we lifted into the air and a wind cooled us
further. Was there a hint of shame blowing
over the hedge? A war somewhere? Our garden
seemed a wide-enough world. And it was

that nakedness—under the blue approval
of an eternal summer sky, joyful
as we were at our palms' plash

on the give and soothe of that fluid glass—
that we'd learn to cover. Exactly

that, nakedness under the button-down
shirt, slid into twin tubes of cuffed khaki
pants, the ticklish nudity of our toes
tucked into socks and shoes, our hearts
curtained behind team logos, and soon

that nakedness tied and jacketed, disavowed
religion of our original trust—
this is the cost of a roof, a car, a desk
job that could go somewhere. This, the cover-up
of what we are—we come across clips of

that nakedness. The long lines of Jews
who've arrived, undressed, and had their heads
shaved, readied to have their arms
tattooed; the Vietnamese girl who's run
out of her Napalm-incinerated clothes…

that nakedness, in the prisons, of black boys
being shown for the ten-thousandth last time
who's boss. It isn't always, but it is so
often, the pale numb skin of the man
with the club, the gun, and the authority over

that nakedness hides in a uniform. I saw,
in Portland, a line of the president's men,
masked and helmeted, oddly in desert-tan
camo, ready to fracture a few locals'
bones, when a fleshy Athena sat down in

that nakedness, in the open before those men,
her soft skin on the macadam, arms and legs
spread, and her timeless form said *Remember
boys, your wet glee in the garden? You're naked
before me now as before your mother then.*

RABBIT INVENTS THE SAXOPHONE
Joy Harjo

When one of the last trails of tears wound through New Orleans
Rabbit, that ragged trickster, decided he wanted
to be a musician. He was tired of walking. And they had all the fun.
They got all the women, they were surrounded
by fans who gave them smokes, drinks, and he could have
all kinds of friend to do his bidding.
But, Rabbit hadn't proved to be musical.
Whe he led at stomp dance no one would follow.
No shell shaker would shake shells for him.
He was never invited to lead, even when the young ones
were called up to practice.

The first thing a musician needs is a band, he said to his friends.
The hottest new music was being made at Congo Square—
so many tribes were jamming there: African, Native, and a few
remnant French.
Making a new music of melody, love and beat.

Rabbit climbed up to the stage but had nothing to offer.
Just his strut, charming banter, and what looked like a long stick
down the tight leg of pants.

Musicians are musicians, no trick will get by.
You either have it, or want it
Nothing else will fly.

Do you know any songs?
What can you play?
Can you sing?
Do you have a piano, tuba, or strings?

. . .

The musicians began vamping,
What can this Rabbit cat do?
Is he going to blow hot air
or fart in the rain?

Rabbit turned his back to the band
Like that genius Miles Davis

Pulled out his stick
He made a horn with his hands.

This stick is so special, bragged Rabbit.
As he turned back to the jam
no one else has one like this.
You've never heard it before.
It's called a sax-oh-oh-phone.

Rabbit's newborn horn made a rip in the sky
It made old women dance, and girls fall to their knees
It made singers of tricksters, it made tricksters of players
It made trouble wherever it sang after that—

The last time we heard Rabbit was for my cousin's run for chief.
There was a huge feed. Everyone showed up to eat.
Rabbit's band got down after the speeches.
We danced through the night, and nobody fought.
Nor did anyone show up the next day to vote.
They were sleeping.

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GUEST POETRY EDITOR,
LESLIE CONTRERAS SCHWARTZ

PHOTO CREDIT: PIN LIM

Leslie Contreras Schwartz is the author of four poetry collections, including *Black Dove / Paloma Negra* (FlowerSong Press, 2020), a finalist for the Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for 2020 Best Book of Poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters. Her work has appeared in *The Missouri Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Verse Daily*, *Pleiades*, and elsewhere. A 2021 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow and the 2019–2021 Houston Poet Laureate, she is on faculty at Alma College's low-residency MFA program in creative writing.

LESLIE CONTRERAS SCHWARTZ POETRY SELECTIONS

WHEN GODS EAT PLANETS
Martin Arnold

We find them at the heart of most galaxies.

They form in the corpse of a collapsed star
If it's important enough, massive as Lucifer's longing.

Reality is distorted in their presence: clocks slow,
Matter stretches.

Every ancient text warns that we can't look directly at them.

It's impossible to estimate how many of them are out there
Or calculate how much they influence us.

The point where all forces converge is called a "singularity"
(I almost said an "ecstasy").

Some are cherubs. Some older than the universe.

Everything we know about them may wrong.

Some experts believe they don't exist at all,
That we've conjured them to fill our emptiness.

Even light cannot escape sacrifices made to their altars.

There is no limit to the adoration they demand.

Love Like a Sledgehammer,
Love Like a No Trespassing Sign

Martin Arnold

My classroom shares a wall with a woman
Who hails from a Texas that feels like another country

When she tells same-sex students holding hands in the halls
That she feels sorry for them
Because they are going to Hell.

There's brimstone in the shadows around her eyes
As she crushes her brow
To express the strangest dialect of empathy:

That *she* is pained
That they have forced a nice person like her
To be this cruel

Because *they* lack the willpower
To control their impulses;

An expression kin to the one she offers me
For letting students post messages of inclusion on my walls
After admin refuses to reprimand her,

Messages of love hung like the heads of enemies
From the ramparts of a castle …

It's good-intentioned people like me, she surely thinks,
Who don't realize the damage we cause,

Prodigal in a promiscuous approval
Undermining the moral fabric of this country.

Have we always been this parochial?

Half the country's furious by the president's refusal
To denounce the racists who support him
But what about the half who aren't?

When the plain girl two rows over
Passes you note that says she likes you
She's suddenly beautiful in the fluorescent light.

There are times when I think it's my mission to save her.

Between us there's a wall
Neither of us can scale

And it's difficult to imagine how to tear it down

Or if what's on the other side
Is even worth the effort.

THEY COULD BE CLOUDS
Martin Arnold

America is a statue celebrating a history
That needs to be toppled.

Our heroes are marauders and pillagers.
Our heroes are swarmed by cameras.
Our heroes are thieves and killers.
Our heroes have millions of followers.

In America we say *freedom* but we mean *know your place*.

When we say *equality,* we don't suggest that any of the inhabitants
Of the shacks on the hills across the river from El Paso
Lean our direction toward a better life.

When we say *melting pot*,
When we say *forge of destiny*

What we mean is *smelter*
Like the one on the banks of the Rio Grande in El Paso,

A smelter where immigrants are melted down
For their most valuable elements

As heavy metals leach into the soil
To flow downstream
To lettuce farms and feedlots and kitchen faucets

And toxins are pumped into the sky
From the mouth of a towering brick chimney

So far above us
They could be clouds.

SOUTHERN CROSS, THIRTY FEET HIGH

Junious Ward

for Bree Newsome

waving in our faces like unanswered prayer,
like a burning bush no one is worthy

to draw near. *Snatch those ol' dixie stars, Bree,*
claw a clawing thing from a rent sky! Obama

said this bit of cloth belongs in a museum. You held history
in your hands like a living thing, choking. Those confederates

shrilled—*Rebel!* Yelled—*Vandal! Heritage*
not hate'd you like emancipation

wasn't a business decision, like slave states
didn't lose the war & throw blood into the sky

like a public hanging for a hundred-fifty years
the way a victor does. *Rewrite the kingdom,*

desecrate the flesh, swallow! These Galileans
gouge a mouth and don't expect the speech

to be shocking. *The museum is torn away!*
I imagine what you saw, raised up like a crystal stair:

something new, the congregation awestruck,
an easier God-sight without heritage

to block the view, your own image
coming on a cloud stretched to a flagging star.

red dirt ancient.

Natasha Carrizosa

(drumming. in her chest.)

i see myself. ancient. a midnight. cave. carving stone. from sanguine. bird. gunpowder. sound. chiseled. flood. stone. sand. for. cheek bones. muddy is my. nose. grindstone. spirit. dancing. two. braids. ibis song. to: speaking. tongues. too. screaming. waves. within me. a message. a wall. of papyrus. beyond tomb. building. bricks that crave. climb. water. como/comál.sun. oshún.

i am a red-skin gal.
i am no chief.
i am the ground.
i am beyond time.

there is red. dirt.
no. samira.
tree bark.
in my mouth.
no. my heart
crown.
swallows
river
one
pearl
drop
lands
one
grain
sand
hands
como
yemaya

i am shore

i belong to wave
i cannot be cut
i am time

i am a red skin gal
i am beyond
abébé fan
my palms (psalms)
trees (spirit)
undefeated (undefined)

i am ibeyi
fire (shangó)
water
twin

i am
always
mother
womb-ing
i am heart
humming
bird
beating
i am returning

to: carving
to: beginning

ancient
drumming

in her chest

i am a red skin gal

BUTTERFLIES ON THE FLOOR
Cassie Premo Steele

I saw butterflies once on the floor,
swampy Sunday morning forest, startled
them as they were eating down below
and something dead was sweet
to them, they piled on the wet
carcass like children playing
with a cadaver as children
do when they are starved for
life and their hunger goes deeper
than the body into a kind of
morbidity and pornography
and I felt ashamed for even
seeing this as if it were my
guilt I carried inside me most
moments that had spilled
outside me and I wanted to turn
away or even pretend I had
not seen it but I couldn't because
the woman I love was with me and
I heard her gasp, "How beautiful."

TRIPPING OVER A STONE
Cassie Premo Steele

I will die tripping over a stone
or holding a stone in my hand
before dawn as if it is my mother's
hand, or holding a stone to the sun
and knowing most everything
in this world is greater than I am
so who am I to try to get anything
done, but I forget this every second
so I will probably die pushing a stone
where it doesn't want to go,
muttering You can do it, I know
you can, Just a little more,
in calm tones, or throwing
that stone as far as I can,
so fast it burns my hand
as it rips away so violently
that my shoulder joint is never
the same, and my elbow – the pain –
the wrist and finger joints –
I will be grateful to be dead
because then I will not be able
to write again, but I would love to
die writing with a stone by my side,
not pushing or striving or trying
or throwing anything, just letting
it be by me like a dog or a pillow
or a baby sleeping or beloved wife
or friend reading – these have been
the greatest loves of my life
and all they did was sit or lie
or sleep or read next to me
so I think I would hope
that on the day I die, by that time,
a long time from now,
but shorter than I think,
I will have learned by then
that allowing a stone
to be a friend is the best way
to go, to die, to let go,
to become stone,
to meet and greet the end.

DANDELION WINE
Daria Ilgova

The ravine's wide. The thread-like path runs near
And summer morning heat is scorching hindhead.
Let's go look for and keep the souvenirs
Of memories until the golden leaves shed.

A burst of laugh is hovering like poplar fluff
Above the heads as summer heat avoids the springtime.
Listen: inside these huts you've come to love
The sounds of happiness ring out and swing wide.

As long as hope of staying young has strength,
Do good. Mix up all saucers below stairs,
Inhale the wind so neither age nor death
Will touch you. They will never dare.

(Translated by Ekaterina Artemyeva from Russian)

ORIGAMI
Daria Ilgova

At taking paper boats down the river
You are a dab,
Though, cranes of paper instead of quiver
just overlap.

However daring inside its creases
the crane may seem,
It never flies. You have foreseen this.
The fate is sealed.

Its folds determined by the creator.
In a box, upturned
The crane lies quietly in a crater,
Awaits the term.

Meanwhile the herbs and skies are longing
For early spring.
The paper crane inside is drawing
Its dreams in pink,

Into the canvas of milk-white clouds
The sun is sewn.
It broke the box, there're no more bounds,
It's flying on.

(Translated by Ekaterina Artemyeva from Russian)

AND NOW, I TIP MY HAT TO YOU
Melinda Ruth

April 6th 5:30pm the Fashion Hat Shop was the first store vandalized during the 1968 Baltimore Riots sparked by the assassination of MLK Jr and the civil unrest in the city.

Used to be these windows would glisten
with feather blue plumes, purple chapel
veils, beaded magenta blooms. These hats
sang, sitting pretty on every Sunday
pew. Used to be my racks ranged

like an organ, each crown poised
and preened, sporting the finest satin sheen.
These hats reached heaven. And I made them
this way. I've folded the firm wool brims, whistled
the ribbon around bands, pinched the dented
top. My hats outfitted the neighborhood.

Now, MLK is dead. Now, my hats crumple
beneath glass as shards mosaic the floor,
slice these pretty ornaments like a cat-clawed hand.
Feather broken and straw bent, these hats will redeem
no one. And so I clean. I clean as they loot
the drycleaners down the block. I clean as they light
fire to my buddy's furniture store. I clean, and I watch
my city burn. I clean, and I watch starched guard uniforms
flood the streets, watch as they march

a red line down Monument. Six dead, damn near
six-thousand arrested and the only thing I know
for sure is Mobtown won't ever be the same.

THE NEW NORMAL
By Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton

I miss the days working remotely
A classroom warming with bodies
The chatter of violas and mariachi horns
A dance solo on the vast 5th floor steps
Competent professionals a handshake away
Fire alarms and intruder drills

Now my office is inside
Full of miniature coworkers
Small hands who leave Lego
on the corridor stairs
Who sing at the highest octaves

during staff meetings
Paint murals on the wall
in permanent marker
despite the boss's disapproval

The nuisance of smiles
overwhelming joy
They come in early
return in terror through the night
always somehow interrupting my quiet time

One of the other managers complained to HR
one of the fledgling workers
busted in on him
while he was making light work of the toilet
Made some kind of comment

Now he wont stop saying the word *poop*
in all his office memos
He has also come to work naked on multiple occasions
HR keeps saying he’s too little for real consequences

The other coworkers just laugh it off

turn my cubicle into a pillow fort
dedicated to unicorns and mermaids
slather my desk in glitter and Elmer's glue
Make me wear a construction paper hat the entire day

As punishment,
make me sort laundry deliveries for the entire office
Clean the the spilled Kool-aid out of the computer keys
gopher all of meals for their picky little appetites

There is a small bright side
anonymous promotions have been handed out
No extra pay, just titles
that none of the employees respect
Essentially just more responsibility
virtual visits, grading online
reports, data entry,
dependable monotony coupled with unappreciation

But something to break through the tantrums
the endless requests for water or storytimes
or cuddles or eskimo kisses
or goodnight prayers or hand holds
or requests to just not be left alone
or petrified
or worried if the will ever see a beach
or hug a friend
or celebrate living
or any of the things we may lose
if we go back too soon

AUDBADE TO MISSING MOTHERS
Leslie Contreras Schwartz

Mexico's shadow, this country casts.
Lights its stores' dawn on the afterglow of missing mothers.

Generations of half-blooded mothers. Full
& blooded. unraveled helix, part indigenous

& part Spanish entanglement. Double helix
colonized and thread barren.

Sick mothers holding
colonies to the tongues.

Mothers burning lightbulbs
for the united state's hospitals, factory warehouses,

mothers without mothers, flat on their backs

pushing and straining through birth
canals without mother's hands.

Their backs for every bead and *at the hour of our death*.

And the doctor's hand all the way
back. In the hallways mothers.

on convent floors and black eyes.
Rolling pins, with cast iron pan eyes.

Hot irons and leather encased,
belts with buckle eyed. Selfie encased, filtered.

Papered doll cut up pasted hanging
on sidelines and off clotheslines and washeteria ghost mothers.

The fevered wet cloth & no mothers.
Menthol & salt, sana to the chicken feet
all-night and all-day mothers.

Underbed cuy cuyed and drunken
limbed men draped on child mothers.

Trapped mouth and earthen mothers.

Cellophane mothers
wrapped air-tight
and shipped through Amazon by mothers.

Lost connection
with no bars or airtime, mother. Mailbox full.

O Mother of mothers, for you bats and nightingales
skirt the ceiling and flinch for what you ghost.

And the baby grabs for the crack
underneath the root.

Mother-of-none, see the baby gumming long
hairs from the marrow

of a country of lost tongues and families.
No one tell her there is no nest.

Baby mestiza gums
the air in fat gulps or half and half

for sugar, for breast.

& when she wails
the bats fly out one by
blackened one to hang

to any darkened crack,
to click an ultrasonic pitch.
and the sisters come

out and bounce echoed cries against trees, against sky
breaking into American-grade light,

against each other and sister,
my sister, what leftover dawn

are we, of our no mothers?

“FIRE SURGE,” Oil pastel on paper by Jerry Gates

REPORT FROM AN ISLAND
Carolyn Forché

Sea washes the sands in a frill of salt and a *yes* sound.
We like beneath palms, under the star constellations

of the global south: a cross pointing upward.
Through frangipani trees, a light wind. Bats foraging.

Foreigners smoke the bats out by burning coconuts,
calling this *the bat problem.* They set out poisonous fruit.

The gecko hides under a banana leaf. So far nothing is said.
A geckso mistaken for a bird that sings in the night.

It is no bird. A healer blows smoke into the wound.
Sees through flesh to a bone once broken.

In the sea, they say, there is an island made of bottles and other trash.
Plastic bags become clouds and the air a place for opportunistic birds.

One and a half million plastic pounds make their way there every hour.
The pellets are eggs to the seabirds, and the bags, jellyfish to the turtle.

So it is with diapers, shampoo, razors and snack wrappers, soda rings
and six-pack holders. Even the sacks to carry it all home flow to the sea.

Wind has lofted the water into a distant city, according to news reports:
most of that city submerged now, with fish in the streets.

It is no bird. The man hasn't sold any of his carved dolphins.
Geckos don't sing. The vendor of sarongs hasn't sold a single one.

Prau, the boats are called throughout this archipelago.
Spider-looking. Soft-motored. Waiting at dawn.

Geckos can't blink, so they lick their own eyes to keep them wet. Their bite
is gentle, they eat mealworms and crickets. This why no crickets sing.

No one talks about it, but people look to the sea
toward where the plane went down. There is time to imagine:

one hundred eighty-nine souls buckled to their seats on the seafloor,
the wind too much for the plane, the gecko now at the door.

After the earthquake, people moved into the family tombs.
Many graves now have light and running water.

Others live at the dumps in trash cities, where there is work sorting
plastic, metal, glass, tantalum from cell phones and precious earths.

This work is slow. A low hum of ordinary life drills into the mind
like the sound of insects devouring a roof. There is no hope for it.

There is onley the sea and its *yes,* lights in the city of the dead,
and a plastic island that must from space appear to be a palace.

I. Dead Letter
Kimberly Blaeser

Kneeling before what god
on another man's neck?

How we lynch now

in America—a forgery
of justice. *Protect and Serve*
defunct as dead letter laws.

George Floyd another notch
on the pearl handle of power.

Tamir Rice Breonna Taylor
Eric Garner Dontre Hamilton
notch notch power notch.

(Spell me another word for master.)

Picture postcards of lynching—
sent √.

Videos of murder by police—
addressed to each hall of justice:

undeliverable—addressee unknown.

II. "& what if hope crashes through the door" *

Migizi burns, a riot of flames, a sorrow—
of suffocating bodies. *I can't breath*

your toxic, America. Sell me windpipe
dreams—of cedar fluted breath, a song

for continuing. For continuing in our shelter
in our streets, without the phallic generals.

For continuing beyond slave ships and war
ships and Nina Pinta and Santa Maria ships.
Beyond chains, treaties, internment camps,
boarding schools and segregated schools
removals and reservations, the phrenology
of race and race and race. . .

How we race now, America

to new emancipation: NO PEACE
WITHOUT JUSTICE. Let us mask
ourselves in hope—all broken of these histories.

Kneel now together and count—
nine minutes to change

*From “Elegy” by Mong-Lan

Another Poem in Which I Watch
Kimberly Blaeser

Another morning ache
wakes me. Breath refusing
to come easy. I don't mean
this is a physical malady.
Perhaps not a malady.

This humanness wakes me.

An April in which I count
dark seeping out. Fragile
this time after dreaming,
before five, before going
to the window as I do.

When I do, I find you
grey against the eternal
mottle of winter leaves
this season we call *waitforrain*.

Find you not waiting
but finding. Tiny sprouts—
leaves or maybe only buds,
but green against the tired
carpet of what has fallen.

And you who do not pause
on the poetic side of longing .

This to be praised I think.

Here where I am still
at the window—still
watching, while oh florious
you are snapping the new
and eating all you can find!

Oh love, would it help to tell?

How your rough grey coat

is scarred—like me a patchwork
of what has not been kind
(and why I am awake too early
too worry and wanting the green
on my tired pandemic tongue).

I could keep the white secret
of your tail, fist this image
tight and open it again tomorrow
before five in the strangle of day.

Or I could follow your leap
into the dense hillside
of not yet, of soon—spend
that feast of flash, of bristle.

Like a flag they say, but no—
that won't do. Not today.
in aftermath of false patriots.
Here in the gloom grey broken
your scut a bloom, a bursting.

Where color is a small holy.

I watch each swift lift, each wave
a language of flare and fly.
Of sudden. And full on sublime.
Like the drama of roached heads
at a June pow-wow—yes, this arch
a sketch of dance. Fusion or trace.
Or enough—to start my breath again.

MY AMERICA
Diana Kostelecky

I miss my America
Born out of the earth more than a thousand plus years ago.
Out from
a ribbon of falls.
Migrating to find the middle place
Creating our culture along the way

I miss that America
Hon' a:wan ulohnanne,
Our land.

I miss the sound of the bone whistle split the frigid, starry sky
Announcing that spirits walk among us
As they have for countless years
Celebrating the cycle of life.

I miss seeing our deities
dance at the plaza wearing intricate regalia
Moving in sync with
the song and rhythm of the drum,
bringing us joy.
Spirits among us
Sing for rain,
well being
And a good harvest.

I miss seeing family as we celebrate being together,
To reconnect as life continues
as A:shiwi, Zuni,
to preserve our culture with each rotation
of Aweklinanne Ts'itda,
Mother Earth
around Yadokkya Datchu,
Father sun,

For now, we must remain home.
Shiwina, my America,
the place I call home,

MY HUSBAND SAYS THE LAST MOUSE IS THE LUCKY MOUSE

Andrea England

I was on the way out. He was behind the blender, still hours
from morning. The time of the year when everything moves
inside or flies somewhere else. I sweep him into the empty

coffee tin and think of Bach, orphaned at ten, the youngest of
eight siblings. Mary and I are on our way to the high school,
where we will meet up with other runners and their bleary-

eyed parents because no busses in Covid. I am thinking of
Bach's fingers while she lifts the lip of the tin for air, but we
are listening to Beyoncé and Megan Thee Stallion. The mouse

is quiet. It is a short drive, the traffic signals still blinking,
mimicking the yellows and reds of October. We joke about
omens as the fluorescent lot looms ahead of us. Mary

is embarrassed and leaves me with the letting go. Secretly
I am thankful, even tickled. I hear a muffled rustling like Bach
must have the first time he leaned in to hear his lover's whisper,

not knowing he was entering into deafness. I pause in the wet
grass before the football field and kneel. Under the stadium
lights, the coaches aim thermometers at our children. It seems

silly to tell you this, but I don't know how not to. I tip the can
and the mouse plops out, doesn't scurry, doesn't sprint towards
a finish, so I reach with my finger. I ask for this permission.

Good little mouse, I say. For a moment I feel what must be
a sadness, all alone in the world, and then suddenly free.

IN THE CEMETERY
Edward Vidaurre

A tombstone — a sorrowful gray there lies a poet
his only visitors — pigeons
the occasional writer with

a pad and pencil
conjuring inspiration from the grave a child — the birthday owers
& tears of remembrance
the friend — reads new poems
from an anthology of odes to rust

> Carved granite
> Slowly becoming a memory
> but did the poet not write about this?
> the grave — death — obscurities ?

The undertaker — listens
walks with a slow wither
that's what feeding grackles will do to pensive man lost in his slow walk — like a stray bullet

> Mounds of marble — teeth of the city
> sinking into the gums of the earth
> cavities of silence
> the narrow lips of father
> the knuckles of abuelita
> the dead suit of abuelo
> the four winds of pandemia

In the cemetery:
Curtains — drawn down
everyday is a celebration of life
time passes — nothing changes
music comes in the form of footsteps and moans

owers are pushed up for the living — owers are pushed up, for our grief

ESSENCE
Kai Coggin

I thinned the seeds already sprouting
in the bamboo garden
the radish beet carrot and bean

pulled each birth
out of the earth
and laid it on my tongue
crushed it with my teeth

and did you know these tiny sprouts
these little leaves and baby greens
already hold the heavy flavors of their final selves?

if only we tasted our own essence from birth
knew the transformations to come
were all part of the becoming—

that we had the imprint all along.

LETTERS TO MY SISTER
Ann Fisher-Wirth

The Robin

In the final photograph of you, you reach up to cup your friend's shoulder. She has taken a ferry, then taken two planes, and traveled a night and a day to come to you. The light through the great-rooted oak outside your window makes your nightgown rosy and the bedroom full of shadows. Something in your eyes is still trusting, still so level and smart. You are so frail you've practically vanished. Like the baby robin we found on the sidewalk in Camp Hill when we were small.

.

The Wood

We're not weeping people. We don't fall out, don't cling to each other. But when suddenly I noticed the rough wooden cart outside the door at the back of the chapel, and on it, a coffin, oh, that was the worst, I hadn't realized you'd be present at your funeral. It was okay as long as you were absent—but this, your *present* absence—your body wrapped, I had been told, in the pale pink linen robe Josh ironed with such love and grief for you, right there, so close— Then they wheeled the coffin forward and I came and stood beside it, to speak of you. I put my hand on the wood, as if I could touch you—

.

Smoocher Gommers

Today, ahead of stormy weather, Bruce picked irises and drove them to your grave. He texted, *I'll be like the old men in the movies—I'll talk to her, tell her what I've been doing.* I texted back, *I've been missing her so much. Tell her smoocher gommers*. Trouble is, I don't remember what that meant. You would remember, J.

.

If I Drove to St. Louis

you would not come to the kitchen door and stand at the top of the porch steps to greet me. You would not have made pozole so I could eat when I arrived. Your kitchen would not be redolent of hominy and ham.

I never told you— when you first got your period, I found the underwear you had buried in your closet. Under a pile of clothes, three pairs of J.C. Penney underpants: the

crusted stains. Snooping, I was shocked, but now I rejoice in you, sweet sister—your privacy, your weirdness.

You yelled at me when I borrowed your clothes and stank them up with cigarettes. In revenge, I locked you out when my friend came over, and you slammed the door to your room and cried. If I could open the door and let you sit on my bed, I would.

The birds hunker down for night in the pecan trees.

.

What Remains

I have lost you—you, who ate vegetables and climbed mountains, who never smoked and lived so much healthier than I. And I've spent so much time being sad. Funny, how it's easier than running my hand along the tough sinew of the actual.

Wind rises in the pecan trees, and the sun glints through the interstices of leaves. A robin disappears into the forsythia. Across the street, our bored, immaculate neighbor wanders around his yard, plucking infinitesimal weeds.

I keep your picture on top of the pile of books by my bed. You are in Paris, at a café, maybe fifteen years ago, holding a newspaper open. Short blonde hair, sunglasses, tank top, strong shoulders. You are reading, lost in the intricate maze of your thoughts. Never did you look more beautiful.

66 children
Naomi Shihab Nye

66 children
and 2 children
ran away with the very hungry caterpillar
the chicka chicka boom boom
in May
they didn't want to run away
did not want to disappear from their own
days
mamas and papas
plastic water bottles
green plastic shoes
how can you
anyone
say
this is okay
this is fine
a bomb needed to do this
for some reason
invisible
to every little person
who liked waking up in the mornings
seeing the light
come in through the windows
fall across floors like a buttery blanket
who liked hours
opening their hands
pages of books
turning
who deserved
more
how can anyone say
we will give you more bombs
to do this again
this was a necessary sacrifice
let's rebuild what was broken
let the big men wear their suits
put their hands in their pockets
talk tough
jingle coins
who deserves to keep things
if not the little people

little boxes
chickens scrapping in dust
vines twining through wire
bugs and worms
hot bread in small triangles
what a waste
every one of them had a voice
perfect deep eyes
hands with five fingers
little brown feet
T-shirts
polka dotted skirts
ribbons
buckets
why is it okay
to cut off such fresh lives
and go on with yours
not one religion
will accept you now
you must wander
in the wilderness
forever
use a dead bomb
as a pillow
have a dream
harder than a stone

LETTER TO MY FATHER

Martín Espada

October 2017

You once said: *My reward for this life will be a thousand pounds of dirt shoveled in my face.* You were wrong. You are seven pounds of ashes in a box, a Puerto Rican flag wrapped around you, next to a red brick from the house in Utuado where you were born, all crammed together on my bookshelf. You taught me there is no God, no life after this life, so I know you are not watching me type this letter over my shoulder.

When I was a boy, you were God. I watched from the seventh floor of the projects as you walked down into the street to stop a public execution. A big man caught a small man stealing his car, and everyone in Brooklyn heard the car alarm wail of the condemned: *He's killing me.* At a word from you, the executioner's hand slipped from the hair of the thief. *The kid was high*, was all you said when you came back to us.

When I was a boy, and you were God, we flew to Puerto Rico. You said: *My grandfather was the mayor of Utuado. His name was Buenaventura. That means good fortune.* I believed in your grandfather's name. I heard the tree frogs chanting to each other all night. I saw banana leaf and elephant palm sprouting from the mountain's belly. I gnawed the mango's pit, and the sweet yellow hair stuck between my teeth. I said to you: *You came from another planet. How did you do it?* You said: *Every morning, just before I woke up, I saw the mountains.*

Every morning, I see the mountains. In Utuado, three sisters, all in their seventies, all bedridden, all Pentecostales who only left the house for church, lay sleeping on mattresses spread across the floor when the hurricane gutted the mountain the way a butcher slices open a dangled pig, and a rolling wall of mud buried them, leaving the fourth sister to stagger into the street, screaming like an unheeded prophet about the end of the world. In Utuado, a man who cultivated a garden of aguacate and carambola, feeding the avocado and star fruit to his nieces from New York, saw the trees in his garden beheaded all at once like the soldiers of a beaten army, and so hanged himself. In Utuado, a welder and a handyman rigged a pulley with a shopping cart to ferry rice and beans across the river where the bridge collapsed, witnessed the cart swaying above so many hands, then raised a sign that told the helicopters: *Campamento los Olvidados: Camp of the Forgotten.*

Los olvidados wait seven hours in line for a government meal of Skittles and Vienna sausage, or a tarp to cover the bones of a house with no roof, as the fungus grows on their skin from sleeping on mattresses drenched

with the spit of the hurricane. They drink the brown water, waiting
for microscopic monsters in their bellies to visit plagues upon them.
A nurse says*: These people are going to have an epidemic. These people are going to die*. The president flips rolls of paper towels to a crowd
at a church in Guaynabo, Zeus lobbing thunderbolts on the locked ward
of his delusions. Down the block, cousin Ricardo, Bernice's boy, says
that somebody stole his can of diesel. I heard somebody ask you once
what Puerto Rico needed to be free. And you said: *Tres pulgadas de sangre en la calle: Three inches of blood in the street.* Now, three
inches of mud flow through the streets of Utuado, and troops patrol
the town, as if guarding the vein of copper in the ground, as if a shovel
digging graves in the back yard might strike the ore below, as if la brigada
swinging machetes to clear the road might remember the last uprising.

I know you are not God. I have the proof: seven pounds of ashes in a box
on my bookshelf. Gods do not die, and yet I want you to be God again.
Stride from the crowd to seize the president's arm before another roll
of paper towels sails away. Thunder Spanish obscenities in his face.
Banish him to a roofless rainstorm in Utuado, so he unravels, one soaked
sheet after another, till there is nothing left but his cardboard heart.

I promised myself I would stop talking to you, white box of grey grit.
You were deaf even before you died. Hear my promise now: I will take you
to the mountains, where houses lost like ships at sea rise blue and yellow
from the mud. I will open my hands. I will scatter your ashes in Utuado.

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SMELL OF SOIL
Luis Albero Urrea

Beauty
pours through us:
each of us a clay jar
breathed alive
by beauty's breath.

Shark skin slits
ocean skin
in curled filigree:
batwing borrows
red dawn light, hefts it in
membrane wings:
cat leaps—mockingbird
flees—crying insults:
hummingbird's
invisible flight
defies prayers
or poetry: hard
shadows, sunfire
cut to diamonds
in a wild bee's eye:

beauty passed
over and through
this this day,
calling: I could have
been you.

GRIEVANCE
Gregg Hurwitz

Few want to see
the dragon coiled atop the treasure

Sapper of Will
Destroyer of Inner Worlds

it devours that which gave it rise
swallowing its tail
and all else

lording over ever-shrinking rewards
talon-clutching gold pieces
until its riches lie
cracked and diminished
a mound of crumbs.

It is the unearned grail
the gift that detracts
the hollow at the core of a man.

A POEM FOR MY UNBORN CHILD
Jamie Ross

I have already carved your bed. As I carved
my mother's bed. There are large trees
left on earth. And their rings spread, calling.
And in your mother's hands, a sprig
of rosemary. In your mother's womb

a flowering fern. How soft
you will be. The roots of this house
hold licorice for your breath. And the swans

who spin the water. And the spring
that curves the wood. As I carved my
mother's lung from an alder grove. As I calved

the first one's dream back into my chest. The
sharp aspiration that wished for a daughter.
Because I was the son. And the knife
given. And the father a tendon,
stretching and contracting. And the loon

a pregnant wish from years ago. Because your mother
cut in a barber's chair. Hands
of the surgeon warted like a toad. The knife

no X-acto for a child's block of balsa, a plane
with paper wings and a rubber band. The father
locked rigid as an iron wrench;
the mother in her labor
bent like a scythe. I hear the rush of snipe

piping in the brush. A rust-stained shovel
trenched in the dirt. A handful of flesh
thrown into the water. The rings
of a dirge, repeating through the night. I

with my fingers. Sew back your feathered pillow. Open
the stream. Rake the stricken jack-pine
clear of the ditch. Weave a brindle blanket
from the Snowy River deer.
Because the fawn is you
Because she is your mother

your cradle's lined in balsam. Milk reed. Deep, sweet
yarrow. I hear a robin singing. Call us
on your way

ESTRELLA BLANCA
Jamie Ross

Still, the rain. An old bus, idling outside,
parked in another year. Below
this upstairs restaurant
open to the cold,

open to all called here, from any route
or precipice, by any star
or accident

to its wide open door.

A couple and their daughter, just
eating breakfast at 10 pm—
as if they've finally wakened

from too many days in confinement,
too many nights

on the road. Awakened to Rocky III,
in a corner, big-screen TV—
Rocky, bloody, lifting his arms

in a V above his head.

The man, unshaven,
breathes deeply.
His wife, smiling, closes her eyes

over their child, in a knit alpaca cap,
who giggles in her lap,
waves a banana

like a sparkling fairy wand.

The bacon's crisp, way crisp,
so long on the grill,
beans a little dry
from hours of simmer;

but the eggs are tender, fluffy,
even sweet

and the salsas and their smoke
get better with age

like the rhythm of the water

as it streams across the windows

and the road's own movie
passing in the glass;

with the whine of the diesel
forever
in the darkness—

in the unnameable place,

the immaculate hour

the unbreachable rain.

EYES OF THE LEPER
Jesse Tsinijinnie Maloney

Hello Leper of Pililaau Park,
 seated on the beachfront gazebo blind,
no eyes, just fleshy caverns hidden by Ray Bans
suntanned beer belly
peering out between buttons of faded red orange Aloha shirt,
  your face isn't as ugly as I expected.
It's wrinkly, but old people are supposed to have wrinkly faces
  your hands are what give away your disease
   your
  short fingers without fingernails
barely grip the handle of your chestnut varnished cane
  lei kukui rests on your chest. You belt stories for us.

"My childhood I bike down Lahaina
little brother sitting on handlebars
    two water logged waxy boogie
boards on his lap
  turn on Pokai Bay street, throw bike in sand
   race to the surf
paddle out past Shark's Cove.
Waves three feet measured from the back
  make for a six foot drop.

  Boogie board and bullshit 'til sunset
Li Hing Mui sweet on my tongue
stings my fillings
  when all seeds gone
  lick the paperbag they came in!

We all get board rash
  rubbing against all that sponge and wax
too much sun and salt water but mine was
  different
  hurt different."

The stethoscope was cold on your back, Take deep breaths.
Mallet taps your knees.
  You saw your mother in her waitress uniform
trying to get in to see you.
  She was politely asked to wait outside.

  "The patient room door closed gently

on my childhood
and was never opened again."

***

They waved, they greeted you "hi boy! Over here boy!"
under a shady bamboo covered lanai
digging into cold crates of Budweisers
'cold medicine' shipped into Molokai.
"Hi boy! What's your name?"

You didn't answer.
You didn't know these people.

"It's ok boy. I know I scary. I know I ugly.
We just excited to see you. There's not much to do around
here. So we just sit in the shade. And sip beer all day."

The beaches of Molokai don't sound like the beaches of Maui
Their crashes confused without brother's laughter.

"what you need boy? You like surf? You like seeds? We fill
this out. They hook you up."

You took the pen, paper and clipboard wrote the word *MOM* and ran towards the ocean.
Nobody chased you. The colony waited knowing when your arms
were tired you'd return.

***

Your story ends. You stand on your good leg
And a line forms. My mom nudges me
towards your gazebo.
I think your hand will feel like loose scabs
I'll accidentally rip off.
When I felt your grip solid I stare into your sunglasses
curious to catch a glimpse of those fleshy holes.

Do you feel me staring? You howl and laugh
that beer belly nearly bursting buttons.
at the sound of the smack my mom gives
the back of my skull.

BURIED TREASURE

Harry Gordon

(*For Karen Blue*)

A year after her daughter died,
she lifted the jewelry gently from the drawer
where she had kept it since the clash
of metal, rubber, glass, and bone,
blue and blond,
sweet and tart,
giggle and growl,
and all the other they could not take up from asphalt,
then,
drawn by some maternal chime,
began to sort into a Mondrian-like box
that soon sparkled with the gold and silver facets
of bracelets, beads, baubles,
charms of butterflies and hearts overflowing
into a shimmering pirate's hoard
and finally a watch she buckled tourniquet-tight round her wrist,
feeling her own pulse
as she set the hands at midnight,
a time that seemed to point at last,
to the fractured ring
through which the rest of her life would pass.

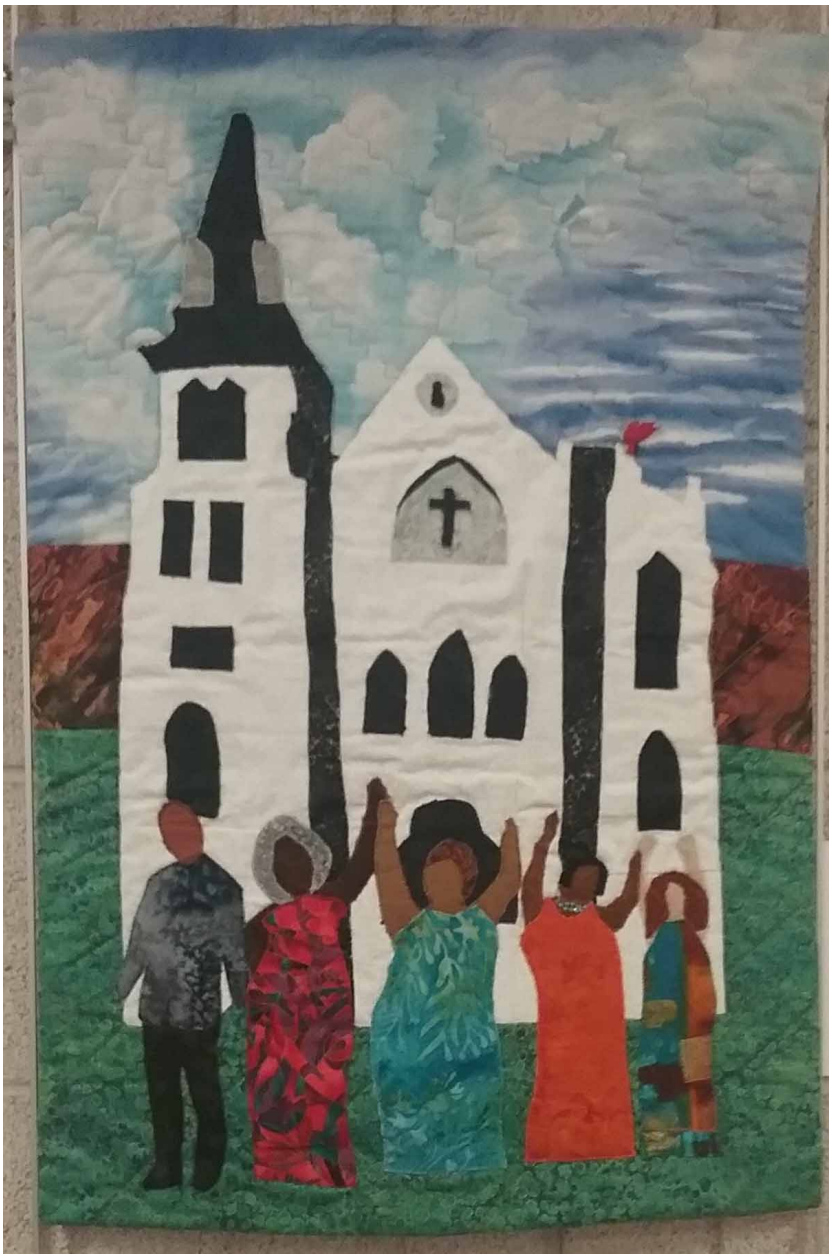
BASIC TRAINING
Harry Gordon

Ozona, Texas, 1965,
the northeastern reach of the Chihuahuan Desert,
four-hundred miles east of El Paso,
two-fifty west of Austin,
the tipping point between the Atlantic and the Pacific
and the place to recruit
the first settlers on the moon,
which seems closer on this night
than the next town.
But I'm not alone,
lying here on a beach towel
between my '54 Ford and Lily
with mesquite, prickly pear
and The Milky Way
for company just off Highway 10.
I'm due at one end of that road
in two days for Army basic training
with Vietnam in the offing.
And she is an A&W car hop
who just got off work.
She's tiny and cute and desperate for company
if she agreed to this desert date
with nothing more between us
than a six pack of Lone Star
and a box of Marlboros.
"I'll come back through here one day," I tell her.
She laughs.
She knows why we're here
and that I'll be in El Paso by morning.
I'm worried about vermin;
she's worried about 1966.
"Any tarantulas around here," I wonder out loud.
"You've got more to worry about than critters, kiddo."
I smile and move my hand
like a spider across her stomach,
undo the top button of her uniform
and slip my hand inside her bra
when through some magical agreement
between awkward and elastic,
a falsie flies like a clay pigeon
across the night sky.

Poor Lily, I think,
but in the black matte finish of a waning gibbous
I can just make out what I'd later call
a drill instructor's grin
as she pulls me toward her.
"Keep your head down, soldier boy" she whispers.
"They travel in pairs."

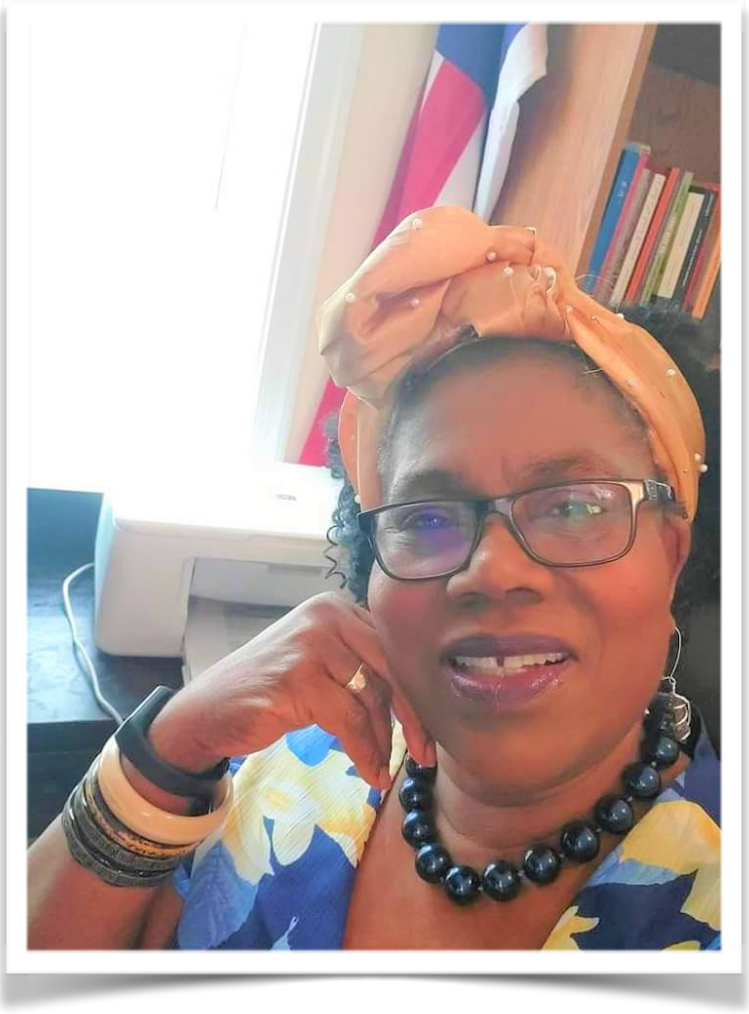
BADWATER
Harry Gordon

Badwater,
Death Valley,
midnight,
December 31, 1999,
alone at the lowest place in America
the moment it was all supposed to fall apart.
The Luddites insisted
we'd be rubbing sticks together by February
while Falwell augured us under the hooves
of The Four Horsemen.
Two-hundred and eighty-two feet below sea level,
but I didn't feel low so much
as on the dark edge of things
where meaning happens
as anyone who has ever seen a Rothko painting can tell you.
I'm clocking 20th century disasters,
World War I,
make that II,
Korea, Vietnam—
Have I mentioned my divorce (make that II).
Nine-Eleven is just up the road,
like the headlights easing south toward me on 178,
the black Funeral Mountains behind intensifying
the only light on earth from where I'm standing,
and me wondering if it's hope
or a tracer round.
I know, feckless posturing,
like a film noir paladin
recuperating from a wound and a dame.
Solo romantic gestures are pointless
without the muted trumpet
and the sympathetic audience.
But there is that guy in the car.
What's he doing here
on a night like this?



“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS,” Quilt by Jacqueline Johnson

SPECIAL FEATURE
POEMS FROM YOUNG LIBERIAN POETS



MENTORED BY PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY

botheration as a Poem
Alexandra Tetee Bonar

Excuse me, Ma,
how do you write a botheration poem?
Do you lay the pencil between your fingers
as blocks to separate man from woman
like a concrete barrier that makes one party
“defensive,” and the other, an attacker?
I hate walls, they are so good as separation!

Wait, wait, something is stuck here.
I would like to pull it out.
Oh, it is my hair, and it is stuck.
My DNA is hidden somewhere in that hair.
I could be traced with it.
How did it get there?

Enough of the questions.
In fact, I’m inserting violence in this poem too.
In this poem,
I will make the woman, the drum, and put
the sticks in the man’s hands.
I will also give him a loud utterance
like thunders,
but I won’t let him touch her hand.

He’ll never touch the finger between
her middle finger and the last finger.
Let me add plates too.
I want them to break in this poem,
So, the sound will utter a vibration straight to your heart.
Sorry, I didn’t mean to say that to you.

But I mean it when I say
I want to write a botheration poem.
A poem that will lay morality aside and apprise immorality
Bends a tree, but breaks a family.
And leaves a mother with a brown boy and a brown girl
So, they don’t look like their mother’s pain.

I want to write tears as rivers,
So, I will set the children inside
it to drown with their mother.

But the children didn’t know how many years
their mother swam in rivers to cross over to dry land.
So, I would keep them away from flowing waters
even though I want to insert violence in this poem.

I will juxtapose the children like furniture.
I will stick the girl in one corner,
to have time with herself,
and the boy in the other corner.
They have to be strong
so they don’t look like their mother's pain.

ENDLESS ODYSSEY
Sunny Eddie Crawford

In your absence, my hero,
every prose I write,
like the long roads of the RIA Highway,

describe memories of this deserted
home, this infant
you left in my mother's womb
before you were gone.

Days like these, I stare at the setting sun,
wanting to hear the tenderness
in your voice while trembling in the dark.

Far across the stream of my lonely room,
sometimes, I wish,
your presence would hide in the reeds
to watch me bathe.
Even the crickets have stopped applauding
with laughter

as they did before. One day I told
my sleepless ego
that you would appear, but you never showed up.
I scroll through
your favorite album now, recounting buried
memories of you.

Tell me, how does it feel to keep Mama
waiting by the window,
staring within the deep, waiting
for your arrival?

A SONG FOR DUCOR
Edward Boateng

In the beginning, we heard of your glory.
Of distant lords singing your glorious ode
And once upon a time, my mother told me,
of men crossing the Atlantic to find in you a home.

This land once beautiful
This land once famous
This land once glorious
is an abandoned graveyard
where we come to inherit
the debris of sad years.
Unmarked graves,
unfinished houses,
broken ceilings,
pictures & clothing
of the dead and missing,
rotten memories.
So-so rotten memories ...

Ma Daisy, is this the same Ducor you sang of?
The same place you cried so bad to return to?

Come and see how this place is a dead body, eaten by termites.
How weeping sits in her throat
How she wears the sting of war
And all that is left of her are empty voices in the dark,
unsure of when the light will return.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO WRITE METAPHORS THAT DON'T CARRY BLOOD

after noor hindi

Ayouba Toure

you write about sunsets and skyscrapers
i tell you about a flag waning in flame about a land
carrying a cater in its chest about a gutted country
i too want to wear my nationality the way americans
do i want to tell my sisters bedtime stories
that won't invite nightmares in their sleep
since the gun yell at us our street hasn't been sane
my father's mouth leaks blood everytime
he unburies an uncle an aunty a cousin
who couldn't outrun the bullet can't you see
the smoke still lingers in the air we drink can't you
see how everything born during / after the civil war
comes out troubled and depressed.

I COME FROM A COUNTRY THAT EATS ITS YOUNG
Patricia Jabbeh Wesley

like a dog. Swallows its own newborn
down its cobra belly, the coiling of forest ropes
around our young trees.
The belly of the ugly politician
that smells of rotten bodies,
carcasses of our war dead,
the blood money of rotten people,
with short eyesight.

I come from the land that is slowly wasted
at the ankles
of sandy beaches.
The beauty endowed us by nature,
foaming with anger, our birthright,
traded in sex parlors to rotten concubines.

One day, God came down
And found a nation asleep
on its hands, a nation that sings
of old age as if
age was a virtue of itself.
As if aging without anything
to show when you open your palms
were alone capable of redeeming
our filthy greed.

I come from a country of tears,
of hurt, of old scars, bursting.
Of unborn brains,
sapped in the halls of corruption.
I come from there, the sand and the blue
skies, the gifts God gave us,
all a waste.

I come walking amidst termites
feasting on our carcasses.
I come from a sea of tears, and I am mad.
After thirty years since the war
began, I sit on *The Mat* again
to grieve a new grief.
But I have run out of tears
to weep for my country.

“THE DANCERS,” Quilt by Jacqueline Johnson

GUN SONG O: WYATT EARP

Petra Kuppers

> October 2017: A picture of cowboy boots went viral after the shooting in Las Vegas, NV
> 59 people dead
> Guns found in the gunman's hotel room included AR-15s, hunting rifles and handguns

Iron silver heavy in my hand it is cool and yes I opened the door and stepped out and my hand on my hip heavy hip down step step down down all eyes and I am so cool and my hand feels old now, finger twang bend again. Please bend I don't want to spill in the street, just feel the straight and the cold metal. Stiff in my trousers, uncurl, blood beat right next to the gun, cocked, gun down, straight shoot, don't look at me, bastard, with the black slick the black back slick hair like a coon's tail, like a smooth silk and furry tail, like a softness, like Josephine's hands. Don't look at me and the gun, silver, polished at night, so soft with the leather slip over my rough fingertips. Or the gun will come up, will slip like silk into my hand, up and out right out right at you and your smooth skin black moustache that would tickle if mouth ass rim lick fire candle flame salon falls into smoke into heat into me. My gun, up and out, hot velvet, and you'll die today die with a whimper at my strong hands my clench.

GUN SONG K: KADDISH
Petra Kuppers

October 2018: Tree of Life synagogue, Pittsburgh
11 dead
AR-15

Count your environment

Hold with your proper grip.

Stand with your feet together

Align the sights.

Take three steps back

Place the center of the first pad of your finger.

Bow slightly to the left

Begin pressing the trigger rearward.

Bow slightly to the middle

good trigger pull.

Bow slightly to the right

Without moving.

Bow slightly to the middle

Squeeze.

Align yourself

TERRA ROCKS

Maria James-Thiaw

Terra rocks, moans, sheds breath heavy as her belly
battered by birth pains, her *hee hee whoooo*
brings no relief from contractions
four centuries apart, getting closer.
The squeeze steals resolve, rests, erupts again.
It comes in waves, the tearing tsunami of pain--

Super spreaders in carona-colored hats,
dark faces threaten blue, just by existing,
Karen “Amy Coopers” a stranger, he is shot
before her latte cools.
Boogaloo bullies paint peaceful protesters into corners.
Distract, destroy, dilute the message. They
call them terrorists for repeating his last words:
I. Can’t.
hee hee whoooo, hee hee whoooo. The pains
return. Breathe, terra, breathe.

Down low, Mother Earth dilates like flesh.
Like water, the bough breaks.
Critical thinkers hear the cry--
Stay home. Protect one another.
Children hang rainbows in windows again,
tie teddy bears to trees, as
wine glasses sing us to sleep.
We hobby, we bake, some are
long haulers, some even survive,
but I, one of the vulnerable ones,
cradle my breath in African cloth,
so my face can protest from a distance
with my mouth safely closed.

HORSES AND SONS

Kurt Trzcinski

for Maximilien Trzcinski (1992-2018)

As he slides the door open, 20 heads turned to look at us.
Big eyes, ears prick forward, joy and eagerness fill the air.
Some bob, one whinnies with a burst of excitement. All push
their necks forward from the stalls. They love my son Max.
He takes care of them.

“you can pet them on their noses...”

he says, approaching the brown and white one, Harley,
fourth on the left. He gently strokes the side of his jaw, as
Harley presses into Max’s shoulder, a tenderness and trust I
have not seen since he became a man.

I knew Max’s pain, or part of it, his addictions
This horse knew only of his care

He leads Harley and Ozzie to the field where the orange
horizon backlights Mt. Baker and a thin layer of fog hangs
low, a grey haze hugs the ground just above the glow of
green

I wanted to talk to my son, to break barriers. And here the
sun, the attentive eyes, the graceful movement of heavy
beasts, broke mine.

I open the gate

We go out to gather a lone horse, Lilly, in a paddock
Max ties her to the lead
but she knows where she is going
to the others
to the herd

“it is a good day for her”

Max smiles, and I breathe softly under her breath
yes, it is

Of paradise—language could not take you there

Jennifer Foerster

From *The Maybe-Bird*

The poem had no temporal defense—
abandoned, it fled its historical texts,
crossed mountains, pretending time to pass.
Up and down stairs, in and out of rooms
I write into oblivion going
nowhere—pen runs out, computer dies.
Are we material or electronic?
Or birds of the cross-sea's alliances,
red underwings igniting the wheel
when autumn's sweep blows in and turns
inward the horizon's eyes, its ripped mouth
bleeding out the burden of a forest.
Paradise—language cannot take us there.
Each pass I cross, the same scene reappears:
alongside the atlas's scribbled road
the singers have fallen asleep in their cars,
an errant breeze through the foliage,
their almost imperceptible ascent.

Sublingual camouflaged lanterns

Jennifer Foerster

From *The Maybe-Bird*

A garden in near disappearance
is subject to distortions of perspective.
The winter's orchids, tough pink and chilly—
cruel syntax of a just-cracked iris.
Beaning from existence, frond-tongued tulip.
Your blood on my lips: nasturtiums. What blooms
dusk to noon then sleeps: birds-nest fern, wild yam,
sublingual camouflaged lanterns.
One tarnished star hangs from the catalpa branch
a curriculum for inner vision:
weeping eye, broken heart, bi-lobed arrow.
I swallow the corm. Waiting to forget
this earth, this honey-glanded pitcher plant,
I bury my face in the garden.

The lightness of it. Language—marvelous thing

Jennifer Foerster

From *The Maybe-Bird*

By blood I encountered my formlessness,
hips and coccyx, netting the bones tender.
I was changing from within the deep vein—
a natural death, evolution's echo,
my swallow's fleet, my loom's blue-metered weft
impressed upon the murmuring river.
I had been critical of the music—
the lightness of it. Language—marvelous thing,
feathered matchcoat of Spanish origin,
flame in my unfashionable closet.
On my crown I can still see the future.
Be mindful, you said. Prepare for change.
I changed the geological record
without past romantic anxiety
because I wanted to understand this
moment in our history: seagulls
hatching from my wrist in full sentences.

IVA REMEMBERS 1918
LeAnne Howe

Give me your hand, John Hoggatt,
Remember our fishing hole at Byng
Fat fish fed from Blue River
I said switch canes from there
Made the finest Cherokee baskets
Remember?

Give me your hand, John
Together we'll catch a mess of perch,
Cut canes for baskets and head home,
We can invite your folks over for supper,
Only a short wagon ride away,
Not far.

Give me your hand, dearest
Remember last fall, we helped build the Byng P.O.
Named in honor of Sir Julian Byng
A British World War I hero.
Your father had a conniption.
You, an Irishman, putting an Englishman forward!

Give me your hand, Johnny boy
I call you home now, I call you home tomorrow
A thousand times I call, even as our bodies flake into stars
Get up John Hoggatt
You cannot stay in this death bed
Hear me.

Walk on Iva, says John, softly.
Walk on my girl,
My girl,
My

IVA RELENTS
LeAnne Howe

No, it wasn't like that – you didn't see
He was lying quietly, mouth shut, one hand on his chest,
The other frozen in mid-stir

We were curled be side one another
When they found us
Be side, what a wonderful word
Be side is the scent I carry
Be side the first man I touched
And him touching me.
Be side John when I was raised from the dead,
Fully awake,
I heard something,
Perhaps our baby
A kitten crying for a saucer of milk
A kitten crying because she is lost
Because she is forsaken
Because she is left alive.

No, not the cat,
Me

女儿 (Daughter)
Emily Anna King

I imagine rain drops making puddles in my cheeks and that's why I have dimples

It's easier than imagining her tears and the blood I left on her clothing the day I was born, the day I cannot name, without knowing the name she gave me, only knowing I am a daughter

I imagine her smile similar to mine,
Running fingertips along my chin, feeling the softness of my cheeks, round
Outlining the echo of her
Wondering if her eyes shimmer like brown stones under water in the sun, too

My mother taught me how to epitomize
love

And I love her,
A woman I can't remember but feel deeply in the core of my being
Cannot touch but for my own skin

She made my heart beat with hers
And her grief tears like the timbre of sad cellos
Through my chest, her love aches towards sweetness
Reverberating like a bass line through my arteries

And I understand that music is a feeling
Deeper than love

Singing across our lifelines

OR HOW I STILL TURN MY TURKISH COFFEE CUP UPSIDE DOWN

Hedy Habra

When I was single, mom, you used to bend over the dregs' configurations, conjuring up budding shapes, intricate encounters rising along the porcelain walls. You'd ask me to press my thumb inside the murky bottom to petrify an incipient evil eye. After I got married, how you laughed at me: you already know your luck! We could foresee trips, reunions, question the cornucopia of inked silhouettes, hollowed tree trunks, animals whispering messages or bearing pearls in their mouths. After you were gone, twenty years ago, I have been reading my own luck every day, projecting my hopes and calming my fears. During the past ninety days at home, I 've maintained the ritual, defying all odds. What am I hoping to find in the cup? I know I won't be able to travel to California to hold my son's first baby boy in my arms.

fall in the garden of Hotel Le Pigonnet, Aix-en-Provence, France

Sheri Sherman Cohen

two white turtle doves in a black iron cage in the middle
of the garden thick with the smell of fall rain and old moss

one listless in the dusk deep in retreat her dark eyes drift
up as the shadows of late days and tall cypress lean down

dawn is dimmed sinking into rain and a dove
gone dead I imagine how

heavy it feels to fall to lie on the cold floor then light
in hand trees turn away and the wind moves on

nothing more but the cries short and a pause then slow
and long her mate's wings lifted by the slight

stir the yellow leaves of the ginko tree against the musky sky turn
and I wake to fluttering in my chest and the sound of wings on metal

ANCESTRY.COM
Neil Silberblatt

I was going to get
one of those DNA tests –
like a home pregnancy test –
except this tells you
your past instead of your future.

You know the kind.
You swab your cheek
and find out
in a few weeks –
assuming your credit card and self esteem
go through –
what region, village or bastard
you are descended from.

I did not follow up,
not due to any aversion to tests,
but because I was afraid that it would reveal
ein einziger tropfen Arisches blut.[1]
And how would I ever get that
blood out of me.

---

[1]*A single drop of Aryan blood*.

POETRY CAMERA

Elizabeth Brown

--*for Ramsés*

We heard stories, he said, *of heaven.*

I was a year old, he said, *in Mexico, in the thirties. There was no money. My grandmother said my mother walked to a cliff edge. She was going to jump holding me, my brother and my sister.*

He told me this, my friend, as we drove past Coachella, past where his mother had found work packing dates. Past a line of smoke trees. As the slow lapse of sunset cast the world in blue, blaze, and purple, we drove.

It was always to travel north, he said. *People went north, and brought back Gringo Barbies. Toy cars.*

To those from the south--Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador-- Mexico was heaven. To us in Mexico, to be here, in the U.S., that was heaven. But we didn't know they didn't want us in that heaven. For those who got here, who made the north their home, they changed, became superior. We would call them "those who have no heart." And they would call us—well, we were like garbage to them.

He had a recurring dream, of going from city to city, and never finding a home.
Go back, the people told him, to where you came from.

We passed the cement factory where his grandfather worked before getting too old and tired, before journeying to Mexico one last time, and then returning, walking over the mountains, carrying bags of piñon nuts and gold.

Take out your poetry camera, he said, his voice deepening beside the crush of the motor. His face aflame, soon to be eclipsed in shadow. *Take a picture of this life.*

MONARCH

Elizabeth Brown

for Ramsés

You pick a fig for me,
it bleeds white
from the stem
torn from the branches
white like mother's milk
or elmer's glue

white like the milkweed I'd
played with as a child, ripping
leaves to see the poison
caterpillars grow fat upon
before winging the earth
in orange, immune
to predators.

When you were a child
your mother left you,
you sold papers, you cried:
"Murder! Man found dead
in alley! Pregnant
woman stabbed!" so people
would buy from you.

This is how I learned
literature, you say.
This is how I learned
to survive.

Our Country
Zach Simon

It's hard for some to believe that water

can flow North, that South doesn't always mean *down*
although that's where we are headed. The first of many

small contradictions that stitch *place* to *land*, like how the Warm
Springs Tribe owns the Falls yet Natural Resources manages it.

How does a Bureau of Land manage all this dispossession?
We don't talk about that passing through Wasco County

along US 197 stretching the hills that are so smooth and flush
with gold wheat like they dripped from a paintbrush. I want to know

more about these hills. Before the highway crews poured concrete
down the gullies and tractors combed the wild grasses out of seed

I try to smell the sagebrush from the window, count the turkey
vultures circling the last unbound corner of sky. Meanwhile

the highway curls its lips, a smile as false as the verdant
green that irrigation colors the valley, all summer long

the creek beds run dry as stone, forgotten as the three dead skunks
stuck to the black pavement. We don't discuss sore subjects, we drape flags

over last century's pick-up trucks to conjure *heritage*, squat
from our SUV's to take Instagram photos of run-down barns

to experience *the frontier*, to imagine a cowboy clutching the sunset.
To listen for the echo of an iron spike pounded in pine tracks

by Chinese immigrants banned from the cities they linked.
We try to memorize the rapids before anglers strip every wild

steelhead from this river that can remember another past. We drive
over these stolen hills to a river we claim to know, call it *Trout Country*

or *God's Country* or *The West,* whatever fantasy sweetens the death
we eagerly swallow. We take everything. Then we take more.

ASSOCIATIVE
David B. Prather

Every little thing has its own
memory of pain, the long fibers of the body
imprinting whatever comes close
by the ruin it will cause.

It is a hidden evolutionary pocket
within each person. In some it is a dark
spot on the lung, or a lesion
on the stomach. And in others,

a reddish sore
in the lining of the throat, a subtle misfire
through the coral recesses of the brain,
or a mass of snakes

rippling through the skull.
Things link automatically, candles
and fingernails, the night the electricity
went out, and your father

decided with the flicker
of the taper that the infection was too much
and pulled the calcium shell away
from the clam-wrinkled nail bed.

Or with pliers the afternoon
he yanked a bloody cactus thorn
out of your thumb. And you think
you can never forgive him

Mexi-poet In College en América

Manuel Calvillo de la Garza

I dream
of elote con chile,
of Renata*'s* besos
and her mom's
pozole,
and awake
to an English teacher
saying it's my turn.

The book in my hands
is The Odyssey*. I read*
page one-four-one,
"I kept going on,
to Pylos*,"*
and teacher says
I have the wrong
translation.

Pues okay, *I say*.

Luego, *we share*
our homework
out loud. I read
my poemita
about the sun
and its devoted
planets,
and teacher says
to stop.

Pues okay, *I say*.

My language
is vague and basic.
My imagery worn,
bloodless, dead.
No bueno (*she tries*
to speak my Spanish)*.*

Pues okay, *I say*.

Y pues okay, *I begin*
writing this new poem—
here, en América,
I learned
I need complex vocab,
so here's a word:
ostentatious—
and here I learned
all language labor
needs politics in it,
so here's a statement:
política—
and here I learned
dashes son sexy,
so here are my guiones—
and I learned
el español *would make*
my work exciting
to gringos—
¡qué bueno!—*and I learned*
my poems lack
clarity, *there is no notion*
of coherence
on the page—
pues okay,
let me be unambiguous:
my name is
Manuel Calvillo de la Garza
(*pronounce it like that*),
this is my poemita,
and no matter how bad
my corazón *is pushed*
and my lengua *pulled,*
I won't go back
for pozole
con Renata.
Not yet.

Going Down for the Third Time Today
Cynthia Good

On the elevator, a woman hears me sigh. She says,

me too. I say, *mine's worse.* I'm shallow and competitive

even in the ICU around all this dying. I fold my mother's red

and white shirt, sweater and sweats into her knockoff

Longchamp bag, street clothes now useless as rags,

beside the blue neck brace, the A-line in her artery,

the channels as hard to count as branches along the river.

ONUS
Angie Dribben

I thought a heart would be soft,
but in my hands it is still warm and solid.
As though still willing to work, just in need
of a body to work for.

My husband radioed me to come.
He'd gotten something and needed
Help. Praise. Permission. I braced
my face that never leaves any doubt.
My husband's underbelly—
anything about him I find displeasing.
I don't want him to know how I struggle with death
he caused. How I grieve a life he took.
He did it for us, he tells me. I don't stop my mouth from reminding him,
We can afford to buy meat.
Perhaps one of the few times in both our lives.
The same time in our lives when we can afford land
to hunt. Why does it work that way?
We must at least be honest about the life we eat.

His chest bows up as he walks down to get me.
Impatient for my praise. Can't wait for me to get there.

He looks so small. What every proud man with a bow in his hand wants to hear.
I mean he looks so vulnerable.
He's over 200 pounds. Look at his antlers.

I am sorry I am awkward at death.
He's just so beautiful. I am so sorry I'm clumsy like this.

I try not to cry. But I should cry. His eyes still open
and large enough to reflect the treetops and the sky.

Then I realize my husband is sad too, he's justifying the life he took.
Needs to hear it's okay. We are the ones who tell each other it's okay.

He still fits in his BDUs. Civilians call them camo.
Call them weekends. Call them hunting season.
It's what he wears to hunt because we remember
what it's like to just make do. We don't buy anything
that something else can be. Do you ever forget not having enough?

He still cries for the Cubans he pulled out of the water.
They were in refrigerators. Rowing in refrigerators. That's what
they were willing to do to come here. And we sent them back.
Sometimes I get dizzy watching my husband wrestle his sociology.

He needs me to take his picture. Help him hoist the deer. To witness
him separate the rib cage, reach inside the cavity, pull it out.
Oil and salt and pepper. I know how to cook it for us. Let it cool.
In other words, let it finish dying. Let it be dinner. Let me be okay.
He asks my hands to open wide, to take his heart.

After the End of the World, Who Are the Ones
Pamela Portwood

…After the end
of the world bruised dirty determined Sisyphus–who
ever breathes–rebuilds.

– Margo Berdeshevsky

After the end of the world, the ones who survived
had fled inland before the tides swept in,
the points of skyscrapers disappearing,
unseen in the nightly static.
Stories spread that the islands had sunk,
the continents consumed by deserts.
The survivors told tales of heroism and love,
but the detritus floating on the new Atlantic
was not romantic. To say the leaves drifting on branches
shivered like a woman's hair caught in sunlight
ignored the bodies, the bobbing cars, the splintered wood.
On land, a plastic bag, freed from a landfill,
tumbled and billowed in the breeze –
such was beauty some days.

After the end of the known world,
before the end of the Anthropocene,
did someone pick up a damp scrap of paper,
watch the sepia stain her hand and think
of the sienna rainbow of earth in Lubron, France,
look at the plain brown dirt in her hand,
remember her grandfather planting tomatoes,
the cylindrical cages, the gross green
caterpillars, her squealing sister,
the dirt in her own hand, crumbling, falling
to the land beneath her feet, the land
that was almost lost, almost.
Did she feel for the ruined earth,
or was she simply longing for her drowned sister,
or her grandfather who was buried
before the final days of the world began?

HOMING I
Jenny Robertson

Turn this room, eventually, into a place that works. A studio of repurposed glass jars, filled with brushes, trays of smooth paper, shelves. Pins on the wall, drop cloths. You want to put it all in your mouth, everything is so purposeful and necessary and bright.

*

these are pins

*

my family doesn't show up

on the map I pinned to my wall

my father - diabetic - took a drill bit

to the index finger

didn't feel it

my mother masks

to the post office

buys a case

of Medalla at the *colmado*

their island news:

the dog digs up dead iguanas

to chew the baby horse runs

its second day alive

*

nursing is a comfort

a reenactment

for the dreaming cat

who seems to have mothered

before we knew her

*

your mouth salt lake

a tempest read as a child

the birds of salt migrant

air full of pollen

silt inverted mountain

lit through dust punk boys

dirty jeans grass by the station

transient wall

the body's outline ticker taped

chivalry is checking in

the hotel bed turned down

all dressed for dinner

or only drinks

stone dogs by the real fire

their heads worn smooth

*

they say whale eye for warning
friendly content no paywall
they say rescue the dog
I can't believe I came here
to make that joke
your bitch
(call me)
come without warning

before the bite the raised lip
tucked tail
circle
get low behind
the back of the knee
the face
vulnerable
children don't
know the signs

*

Turtles available now on a postcard so we'll remember
the patterns that divided
their backs, the million year shell game,
their ways of homing more magic
than cartography. We almost achieved emptiness,
scooped room for cook's broth,
the long ship voyage. Discovery, we said,
of infinite variation. Flowering springs, sprigs
for our hair. Someone new in each port.

DINNER AT ANN'S

Melanie Murphy

I arrived like glass
on green beveled water.
In her front door
I reflected. I knocked.

Greetings. Wring
your seaweed
shattered socks for
I have just polished the tile.

We ate green beans and peas,
a smidgen of pigeon with
ununctioned onions,
asparagus, spinach, and leeks.

We spoke of lovers lost
and the damned, of dog hair
coats, of living on the edge
of France, and how, try as you might,
you just can't undo the dead.

After dinner, coffee, black
steam singing from the lipstick
on the ledge. She cut the upside-down cake.
She turned away her eyes.
She licked the other side of the knife.

BUCKETS
Melanie Murphy

1. My mother lived

   (a) in a house trailer
   (b) in a horse trailer
   (c) on a reservation
   (d) in a former prisoners-of-war barrack

2. My mother carried

   (a) water from the spring, in buckets
   (b) water from the well, in buckets
   (c) water to the horses, in buckets
   (d) the dismantled engine of a Volkswagen, in buckets

3. My mother gave birth

   (a) in a house without running water
   (b) without a midwife or a doctor
   (c) in the middle of the Ozark National Forest
   (d) to four live children and one other

4. My mother knew how to

   (a) save seeds
   (b) sew a new coat from an old one
   (c) keep milk cold in an irrigation ditch
   (d) bury her weaknesses in the desert

5. My mother believed in

   (a) the ever-loving arms of Jesus
   (b) the silver linings of clouds
   (c) sucking it up
   (d) the inherent goodness of mankind

LOOSE HORSE
Melanie Murphy

A new mare prances up and down, unbridled,
her tail a flag above her back. She's gone
green, jumped the fence, snapped

the girth and trampled the reins. She's spit the bit
and swabbed its taste from her mouth
with another tongue. She's muddied

the welcome mat, wiped her saddle-sweat
on the curtains. She's eaten the red off the roses
and left the thorny green.

LID TO THE UNIVERSE
Olivette Petersen

If it's true that no man steps in the same river twice,
then we meet for the first time every morning,
two new souls in recycled shells.
Camus once said that Autumn is a second spring,
even decay is rebirth.
the cold that sharpens the air,
that chills the lining of my lungs
as I walk across the river, suspended
will later warm my skin
and raise strawberries from the soil.
Do you find it strange how we breathe without thinking?
That October was once the eighth month
until Julius Caesar showed up?
That we could be moving
but our legs are numb.
we are made of the same matter as the dinosaurs,
and when you asked me
"Does love have a ceiling?"
I couldn't quite answer.
We can see Venus with the naked eye,
Pluto with a telescope,
and while some scientists think that the universe is flat,
no spaceships have found the lid.
Every leaf is a flower, Camus said,
and the oldest magnolias
continue to grow.

MYTH OF A WOMAN
Olivette Petersen

Beside the torn and rotting corpse
of a whale washed ashore, a woman
kneels, her arm extended
towards the creature, with palm
open, fingers reaching
for the beast.

The lifeless body held by the rocks
Like a compass arrow
Towards the water,
Gone.

Behind her, a row of snow skinned
Mountains stretches
Like a limb
Towards an unknown end,
The horizon unmoved
By the woman or her anguish.

THE LESSON OF THE DAY

Teresa H. Janssen

December morning lockdown drill,
I tell my students,
you are safer at school than on a city street.
They don't believe me.
They read the news.

I review:
close door, lock it, pull blinds,
grab something to throw, just in case.
Find a safe place to hide,
a table to turn,
barricade.
If gunshots are far away,
prepare to run
for your life.

I try not to cause distress.
I don't want to frighten them.
It is, after-all, a drill.

The teens crouch
against the farthest wall,
one curled into a ball.
Anxiety clings like winter frost.
If this were not public school,
I would teach them to pray
for serenity.
Silent, we wait,
the bell sounds,
we move back to our seats.

When did securing my high school classroom
against a gun-wielding intruder
become routine?
I stifle my rage,
push fear away
and return
to the lesson of the day.

ALICE
Teresa H. Janssen

Euphemistic acronym
cannot disguise grim uniformed men
schooling us to defend
against a shooter.
Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate

Two dozen hushed trainees
herded into a Physics room.
Coach cracks a joke,
English teacher hoots,
sounds like a howl.
Counselor stakes out a corner,
Math teacher measures,
crawls beneath a shelf.
I, the historian, wait next to an alcove,
primed to duck unseen.

Concealment feels natural
for we who suppress fear as habit
and hint around faculty lunch tables of
buried anxiety and the disconcerting dream.

Shouts from the hallway,
armed man bursts in.
We overturn tables,
form a blockade,
pitch foam balls (props we've been given.)
Burly teachers charge,
knock the weapon from his hand.
We flee
to the playground.
But it is a game.
I am certain those near the door
will be shot
before an assailant is disarmed.

Who knew
when we chose to educate
that our duties would expand
to hurling our bodies
at an intruder with a gun
and instructing children
to hide or to run.

THE WANDERING
Connie Post

The names on the street signs
fade
the words blend together
like children in a small hut

the lines in the road
fall beneath the asphalt

you walk around
looking for a familiar turn
in the road
a place you used to watch
the milk man drive by

you stare at strangers
and they look right through you

your skin is already translucent

you swore to yourself
you would not spend
too much time
looking for that same spot
on the sidewalk
where you stepped
on the crack
to break your mother's back

you didn't truly want it to break it
or maybe not all the way

you just wanted her to remember
the endless years
of ping pong paddles
beating you to the floor
the spine that never healed

at night when you are speechless
you wonder
if a dying language
can be saved

SURRENDER

Helena Lipstadt

Most of us are about as eager to change as we were to be born.
James Baldwin

I won't get it right yesterday or today.
I won't get it right tomorrow. Still
I throw myself into the waves
of every time
my grandmother puts
her shabbos hands on my head
every time
she smooths back my hair.

Backward and forward I won't get you right.
Maybe your grandmother held out her hand
and you took it and were tall.

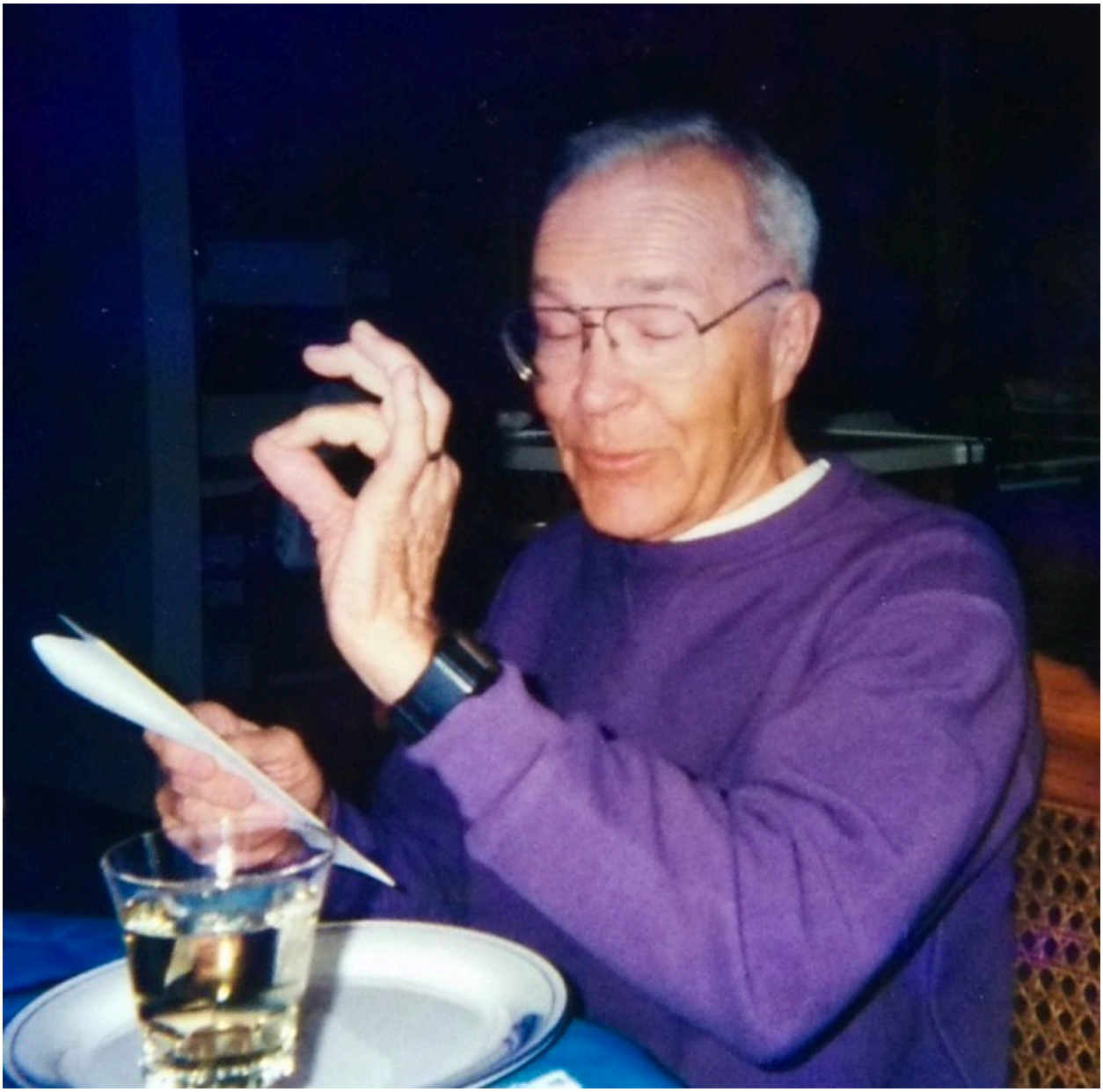
What am I trying on?
That we are the same in our ancestors' blood?
We are not. And maybe blood is the first place
we understand each other.

I try bleeding, dreaming, breathing,
shaking my pen, shaking it until ink splats.
Pandemic on pandemic
some will drown.
Some are drowning.

The seas part and I am here
to your noose and my gas, *presente*
Who walks through to the new land?
Do I? Do You?
Do We?

And those hands I imagine
my grandmother's hands
never touched me at all
gone in that great drowning.

How do you hold
the compound fracture of your heart
when you undress your body
to the tide?



J. C. BELSHE, M.D.

SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO J. C. BELSHE, M.D.
VIRGINIA POET WHO TURNED 100 IN 2021:
curated by WILLIAM PITT ROOT

WHEN I DIE
J.C. Belshe, M.D.

Listen.
When I die please bury me
Where the ground is soft
And the wind blows free.
Where the juniper odor
On the summer air
Lifts my ashes
I don't care where.
And don't advise anyone
To visit or mourn.
But save their energies
For the tired, the forlorn.
Remember me
In your bones and mind
As a smart old doctor
Of that special kind
Who never tired of learning
Whether good or bad
Of all that makes up life
Among the happy and sad,
Welcomes the neutrinos
Their subatomic kin
The life after death
What Is, has been.
Please, never ever wonder
That I choose to be
Part of recycled stardust
Captured but free.
2011 and all I can see
Is the ancient Creator
Making fun of you and me.

AD ASTRA
J.C. Belshe, M.D.

Ad astra with one exultant surge
Bold mankind gropes anxious search
For immortality while yet mortal —
The desire of the created to be creator?
A reach for glory with withered hands?
Perhaps not just the flexing biceps
Of a primate dusting off the sands
Evolution strewed on his shadow.

CROW
J.D. Belshe, M.D.

Flight seems a bit uncertain,
Until you see,
A crow on a windy day
Landing in a tree.

“UPDRAFT IN BLUE,” Mixed media on paper by Jerry Gates

NONFICTION

FIRST PLACE BARRY LOPEZ PRIZE

TIMOTHY DELIZZA

LEGALLY SPEAKING, RATS AREN'T EVEN ANIMALS
TIMOTHY DELIZZA

The Zealotry of the Newly Converted

—

Certain unpleasant tendencies are often falsely blamed on youth when the true culprit is the zealotry of the newly converted. The exuberance following initiation afflicts all age groups more or less equally, but young people must necessarily enter so many new clubs at once that correlation can appear as causation.

What follows is well known: sanctimonious proselytizing to the uninitiated, a desire to explore all facets and annoying absolutely everybody, including your parents,

friends, longstanding club members and (eventually) your own damn self when you look back.

And so, at age 40, I approach my recent conversion to rat fancier with humble awareness that I'll likely someday wince rereading this essay.

My Rats!!!

—

Let me tell you all about my new rats. For almost nine months, I've been living with two brothers, Harry and Gordo, and their cousin Vinnie. I gave them wiseguy names to link them a little to my Brooklyn Italian roots.

Their respective mothers, Phew and Tomato, were dropped off as pregnant teenagers at a rodent rescue in Frederick, Maryland, about a forty-minute drive from Baltimore. Tomato arrived plump like a tomato, and predictably had a massive double-digit litter. Coming from this crowded womb, Vinnie is smaller than his cousins.

Gordo and Vinnie have hooded markings, meaning they have black faces and stripes that go down their spine. Harry has Berkshire markings, meaning his whole body is solid black except white markings around the belly and, in Harry's case, around the wrists. Harry's belly marking looks a bit like a lightning bolt and is quite brave. These special markings likely saved their ancestors. Breeders set aside rats with unique coat patterns to sell as pets while raising fodder for rat-baiting—a traditional blood sport wherein rats were placed in a pit, and spectators gambled on how many rats a dog could kill in a set time.

From the start of our cohabitation, I've been continually surprised by how uniquely them each rat is. All three are charismatic in their own ways:

Harry is bold and independent, and will wander off during playtime in search of engineering projects. I left an old book in the cage, and after a few days he spontaneously tore the pages to create a literary nest. He'll legit spend minutes removing the shell from a nut, and then not eat it; he's only in it for the challenge. When he's feeling social, he'll play tug-o-war with a cork on a string, but a better bet to interact with him is acting as helper in his current project.

Gordo is somehow both the most skittish and the most sociable. He'll join Harry's engineering projects but clearly mostly does so to hang out, and he doesn't always grasp how best to help. He dislikes being alone, which conflicts with his reluctance to explore, and will often only join exploratory adventures after the others. Although initially skeptical of humans, he's grown eager for interaction, constantly climbing up legs to get to shoulders. He's also our gourmand.

Vinnie has no engineering instinct, and would rather occupy himself with solving puzzles and hoarding nuts. I'll find his caches while cleaning out the cage. He will try

most food out of politeness, but has clear favorites and can be choosey. He seems to like and hate being pet, similar to how a good kid will grudgingly let his mom to adjust his look right before he goes into school (but secretly enjoy it).

Such stark individuation will be familiar to animal lovers, and these points tiresomely obvious to experienced rat lovers, but I was still surprised to see this in creatures that are so openly stigmatized as unpleasant pests.

MISCHIEF

—

A group of rats is called a mischief. This is fitting. They are curious, with a need to carefully explore their surroundings, chewing through boxes and tipping over containers to see what spills out. Rats return to the days' puzzles in their dreams and imagine where they'd like to go in the future.

They love climbing up things without a game plan to descend, often resulting in a tumble. They do not have dignified falls like a cat who pretends that was his intention all along; indeed rats are endearingly graceless, clumsily dropping without shame. They remind me of when I was a kid skiing, and my only strategy for stopping was to fall down.

My rats are intelligent. They make sustained eye contact when I lift them, understanding there's more information there than in my hand movement. Sustained, communicative eye contact is not as prevalent in wild animals and is a mark of advanced domestication similar to the co-evolution humans have developed with dogs and ferrets. They come when I call them (unless they're ignoring me), but won't respond to strangers. They know the difference between storage food (nuts, chocolate, rat block) and fresh food (cooked grains, herbs, smoothie), and stash or consume accordingly.

They effortlessly communicate when they: want to leave the cage (coming to the front and putting their startlingly human-like paws on bars, seeking my eye contact, eagerly hopping into and from the rat taxi); stay in (going to the back of cage, avoiding eye contact); leave the cage but are timid (Gordo especially will rush to the front, then back, and only after you woo him with flattery will he hop into the rat taxi or pouch); and are done (crouching by the door and peering underneath; then, if this fails, repeatedly climbing to the top of my head). Playtime activities range from dog-like fetching of nuts to cat-like chasing of cork on a string to solving food puzzles.

My rats are fickle eaters. After they tried corn for the first time, for weeks you could practically hear them shouting "OMG! Corn is everything! We'll never get sick of corn!" Then as abruptly, corn is passé; they've collectively met and decided this week raw oats are everything. Their favorite fresh herb has cycled between basil, cilantro, mint, thyme and parsley.

Rat Lore

—

A “rat king” refers to a collection of rats conjoined by the tail. The tails are bound with dirt, blood or feces. The appearance is an alleged omen of coming plague. Originating in Germany folklore, most historical examples were hoaxes or closer to cryptozoology than science. Yet, the resonance of rat kings suggests much about rats’ place in our collective psyche; they are unclean figures evoking disgust.

Yet, this folklore isn’t linked to ways rats actually behave. Immediately after moving in, my rats designated a proper “poop corner.” While their cage gets gross without regular cleaning, my rats themselves have a pleasant musky smell similar to a dog or horse. They keep themselves fastidiously clean through cat-like grooming. On waking, they immediately do their toilet, and decline to come out to play until presentably coifed. They shame me when I give them greasy foods, licking their paws as if to say “how do you guys eat this stuff?”

They are not at risk of becoming conjoined by filth.

—

In children’s fiction, from Lady & the Tramp to Brian Jacques’ Redwall series, rats are typically depicted as cunning, cruel and conspicuously male. By contrast, mice are often depicted more charitably in popular culture—from Mickey to Stuart Little to Algernon.

These depictions are far from reality. Rats are prey species, and largely steer clear of human affairs unless necessary. Pet rats are less likely to bite humans than dogs, gerbils, hamsters or guinea pigs. Even wild rats bite humans only as defensive, rather than aggressive, behavior.

Due to a recent common ancestor; rodent DNA is 97.5% identical to human DNA, essentially the same genetic similarity we share with dogs. Amongst each other, rat bonds resemble human bonds. Rats altruistically help other rats (and befriended-humans) in distress, even when helping comes at personal cost. They make facial expressions in reaction to pain that are understood by other rats, although they (also like humans) sometimes ignore others in need if bystanders are already ignoring the distressed rat. Although hierarchical, male rats amicably live together within colonies (unlike male mice, who can’t co-exist). Refreshingly modern, female rats typically choose their partners and when coitus will occur. After sex, male rats sing.

A recent viral video from India demonstrates rats’ parental instinct: during a storm, a rat dives into her flooded burrow, only to reappear with a pup in mouth. She carries him up multiple stairs to dry safety. The mom then scurries back down the steps

and dives in again, repeating the act several times. Each dive takes a little longer, and the mom appears wearier. Finally, the children are all rescued from drowning.

Wild rats have friends and territory that they stick around, which make up their colony, and they rarely stray. According to Dawn Day Biehler's Pests in the City, if you abduct a rat and leave her in an unfamiliar location there's a 90% probability that she'll leave that area (presumably in search of home) or die. Indeed, a key reason rats survive everywhere, including the NY subway system—whereas wild hamsters barely exist—is that rats are emotionally-bonded pack creatures. Even during the spring 2020's period of Covid-induced food scarcity, desperate rats mostly attacked other colonies for food and territory rather than internally collapsing. The first thing rat aficionados tell newbies is to adopt at least two, probably three. Solitary rats grow lonely.

—

My rats' emotiveness and affection make most non-canine pets appear downright aloof. Rats do little hops called "popcorning" when happy, and their ears grow pinkish. They prefer sleeping stacked on top of each other when there's about ten other beds available. If I spread a nut butter thinly on my hand, they lick carefully, so as not to hurt me.

Like Rats

—

In The Lives of Animals, J.M. Coetzee describes how idioms such as "they went like sheep to the slaughter" are often employed to imply that people harmed in atrocities were dehumanized.

He suggests that these same metaphors also demonstrate how little we value sheep.

In The Right Stuff, Tom Wolfe described how the Mercury Seven—the original NASA astronauts—felt training for the first human space flight. The pilots recounted how the doctors assigned to the mission:

> had devised a series of novel tests involving straps, tubes, hoses, and needles. They would put a strap around your head, clamp some sort of instrument over your eyes—and then stick a hose in your ear and pump cold water into your ear canal. It would make your eyeballs flutter . . . If you wanted to know what it was all about, the [doctors] and technicians, in their uncompromising white smocks, indicated that you really didn't need to know, and that was that.
>
> . . .

> It began to dawn on [the Mercury astronauts], first as a feeling rather than as a fully formed thought: 'Lab rats.'

Every day countless rats in labs feel like lab rats. What is done to them is largely unregulated because, legally speaking, rats aren't even animals. Rats and mice are excluded from the definition by the federal law that regulates animal testing. Specifically, provision 7 USC § 2132(g) of the Animal Welfare Act provides that "[t]he term 'animal' means any live or dead dog, cat, monkey (nonhuman primate mammal), guinea pig, hamster, rabbit, or such other warm-blooded animal . . . or is intended for use, for research, testing, experimentation, or exhibition purposes, or as a pet; but such term excludes . . . rats of the genus Rattus, and mice of the genus Mus." Laboratories lobbied for this exclusion arguing that compliance would be expensive, but other western countries do not have similar exclusions and institutions often adopt protocols either voluntarily or to qualify for certain funding.

The Animal Welfare Act doesn't exempt covered animals from experimentation or guarantee humane outcomes, and nearly all non-human animals are denied their personhood in labs. Rather, the regulations merely provide minimum requirements as to housing and care, and the possibility of federal inspection. Parts of the act read like the bureaucratization of evil. For example, 7 USC § 2143(D) provides that "no animal is used in more than one major operative experiment from which it is allowed to recover except in cases of scientific necessity or other special circumstances."

The Animal Welfare Act came into being shortly after public outrage caused by an article in Life magazine entitled "Concentration Camps for Dogs," an expose into practices by then-unregulated Maryland dog breeders, and likely as a result dogs receive the act's broadest protections. Despite this, in practice the act doesn't even preclude such invasive research such as recent Veterans Administration experiments that involve severing dogs' spinal cords to test cough reflexes and, as described by Lois Pope and Robin Ganzert in USA Today, "removing parts of the dogs' brains to test neurons that control breathing prior to killing them."

Rats and mice are placed far further down the hierarchy of protection. They're categorized somewhere sub-animal where experimentation doesn't need to be reported —as concerning to the federal government as scientists sawing into tree branches. This exception to regulation becomes even more absurd when you consider that rats and mice make up 95% of all biomedical research, meaning America's lab regulations protect all animals except the two actually being experimented on.

This absence of protection provides scientists with broad latitude, and that latitude is used. Rats are bred to be immunodeficient, insulin resistant and with nearly every other imaginable human condition. Almost all are killed immediately after testing

concludes. Googling “ways to kill a lab rat” reveals lengthy debates on techniques. The most popular method is an application of carbon monoxide followed by breaking of the rodents’ neck, descriptions of the emotional toll on those tasked with the killing, and frequent acknowledgment that the standard method is not humane. Following the outbreak of Covid-19, across the world countless lab rodents were killed because of the absence of planning for disruptive events like a pandemic. The decision to simply cull colonies was almost immediate and reflexive, with limited consideration of our obligations to test subjects.

Language is often employed that sanitize scientists’ actions. Rat colonies are “culled,” “terminated” or “euthanized.” One patient—after being shown the rats who had his cancer grafted onto them—was overcome with gratefulness and said they were “willing little soldiers fighting in my behalf” before acknowledging that the rats actually had no choice. The most popular term used by researchers, though, is that the rats were “sacrificed,” evoking an altruistic acquiescence by the rats and a religious offering by the experimenters.

—

This is true: the only time that Harry, Gordo and Vinnie have ever tried to bite me was when I put on blue nitrile gloves for cage cleaning. It was though an innate alarm had been triggered.

It was as though they knew everything.

Behavioral Sinks

—

From the late fifties to the early seventies in a barn on the outskirts of Rockville, Maryland—a half hour drive from where my rats were born—John B. Calhoun ran experiments where he created “rat utopias” and “mouse paradises” in which he gave rodents unlimited resources but finite space. As overpopulation grew, the rodent societies devolved: mothers neglected children, males grew either overtly aggressive or excessively subordinate, cannibalism ensued. Even after the populations declined, the surviving rats were understandably too psychologically scarred to function. An assistant commented that they’d created “hell.”

Calhoun wrote of his research, “I largely speak of mice, but my thoughts are on man.” He suggested that overcrowding resulted in the eventual development of “behavior sinks,” which marked the collapse of social cohesion. Calhoun literalized his worries about humanity’s future by placing rats in a situation designed to create an overcrowded “rat hell,” then used the predictably awful results of that overcrowding as a cautionary metaphor for humanity’s future. In essence, rats were tortured to provide a

veneer of scientific heft to Calhoun's abstract concerns about human overpopulation. Indeed, Calhoun's research is still evoked for this purpose.

The experiments were never metaphors for the rats involved. Every day for about a decade, Calhoun went into a barn and carefully cataloged the dissolution of rats' social structures. Although he played the role of neutral observer, he knowingly created and re-created the conditions for those events. He ran his rat colony experiment three times, watched it dissolve three times, then repeated the process with mice.

—

Adoption day was stressful for my rats.

Like most pets, Harry, Gordo and Vinnie had no agency in the household they were placed in. They were removed from the foster home where they'd lived since birth. Then handled by strangers (my girlfriend and I) in the back of the car. After this, they were separated from their siblings, placed in a carrier and driven back to my place. The entire time all three were cowed and anxious: Vinnie constantly groomed himself to manage his stress, Harry ate his own poop (something we never witnessed him do again, although coprophagy is common rodent behavior), Gordo hid in the rear of the carrier.

Once at my place, we gave them peas and let them nap in the carrier on the dining table.

Then, an unexpectedly poignant moment happened when we introduced them to their cage. They immediately rushed around with energetic abandon, looking at their new hammocks and hidies. The day's stress cathartically lifted. To this day when I rearrange the cage on cleaning day, they recreate a subdued version of that frantic first inspection.

I can't confidently interpret the feelings beneath their excitement, but I was pretty sure they got the general parameters of what was happening—that they weren't in present danger and in fact had reached a comfortable new home. I hope that they also understood something deeper: that a pact had just been made between human and rodent. Acknowledging the power imbalance that meant they didn't have true choice in accepting, I'd describe the interspecies pact created as a promise of a forever-home and my companionship in exchange for their companionship and their lost autonomy; both sides have largely kept the bargain. (If this sounds melodramatic, recall that Calhoun looked upon his rats and saw the doomed fate of all humankind).

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Calhoun made a similar pact with his rats: the apparent promise of a comfortable rat existence—which they lived in the early days in the barn—in exchange for lost freedom of movement. Like the Mercury Seven astronauts, they never understood the parameters of the experiment.

However, Calhoun's pact was false. His barn never was a rat utopia—utopia requires sufficient space. He purposefully encouraged boundless rat reproduction knowing rats had few tools to manage their population; they'd no ability to sprawl like in the wild, no concept of birth control, and no understanding of the rules of their containment. Calhoun designed the rat colony to fail, the only question being how the catastrophe would unfold—gory details that he fastidiously filmed and reported on. The results feel even crueler given our current knowledge that most rats' innate instinct is towards altruism and avoiding others' suffering.

The whole thing reveals more about human anxieties than what would truly happen if human society became overpopulated. After all, even in Calhoun's time, humans had knowledge of reproductive biology, family planning, urban development and so forth. Even if we didn't deal with the issue better than rats, we'd surely handle it differently. In the end, the metaphor that resulted from Calhoun's experiments was always flawed, working better as rhetoric than scientific insight.

Revising the Pact

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All this begs the question, why actually run the barn experiments at all? Before Calhoun's research, did anyone doubt that human overpopulation would eventually end badly? If so, have we learned anything that wasn't knowable through other, less awful, methods?

He could have studied actual human overcrowding in cities, or he could have travelled to India, where a natural plant cycle causes a rat famine following overabundance, resulting in "rat floods" that swarm local crops and exhibit aberrational behavior. Such a flood was occurring when Calhoun conducted his barn experiments.

The problem of troubling treatment of rodents isn't limited to Calhoun. Deprivation studies continue to be common, including emotional (i.e., maternal separation) and physical (i.e., suturing shut eyes). Like Calhoun's experiment, the findings of most rodent studies do not transfer usefully to humans. A recent Cosmos article notes that 95% of drugs tested in human patients fail to reach market, despite prior positive results in animal studies. "There are lots of reasons why," Thomas Hartung, a Johns Hopkins toxicologist told Cosmos, "but in essence we are not 70 kilogram rats."

Indeed, Johns Hopkins—which still uses animal testing—has a whole Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing. Many alternatives to animal research exist including use of "human cells and tissues, 3D printing, robots, computer modelling and other sophisticated methods to carry out experiments."

If rat bodies are indispensable to human research, perhaps we should reassess our collective pact with lab rats. We could implement federally-mandated best practices informed by rat psychology, such as giving them the comfort of keeping family members together throughout their lives and providing them with puzzles and projects to limit monotony. When research is complete, instead of permitting the mass killing, we could require rat retirement farms after their tour of service. Rats only live two to three years, and so why not give some quietude at the end if a rat remains healthy enough to enjoy it?

Whole bodies of literature exist suggesting best practices from the use of proper pronouns ("she" instead of "it") to adoption options after completion of research. Others have advocated using environmental enrichment rather than depravation in studies through giving lab rats more space, resources and puzzles to see how they develop. For example, scientists trained labs rats to drive tiny rat cars, and have shown that the more mentally stimulated they are from birth the better drivers they are.

Implementing additional protections for rats may raise research costs moderately, but taking autonomy and life from sentient species should be costly.

Moreover, the benefits of this shift wouldn't just be to rats. Exercising empathy is like flexing a muscle; it strengthens through exercise. Such practices would foster more empathetic scientists and researchers, and encourage the already empathetic to remain in the field. This, in turn, would benefit all humans.

One, a Tragedy; A Million, Pest Control

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As chronicled in Biehler's Pests in the City, humanity's main solution to the complex problem of protecting human areas from rodents has been baited poisons. The first sophisticated rat poison, the fast-acting ANTU, was developed in the '40s. At first, ANTU tricked lab rats but when dispersed was ignored by Baltimore street rats. After reformulation, the raticide was distributed using an expensive, community-supported campaign. The poison killed only 60% of the targeted colonies and the rat population fully recovered within a year. The remaining rats often showed increased resistance and bait-shyness.

In the '50's, ANTU was supplanted by warfarin. Warfarin is the blood thinning chemical in Coumadin, used for humans. It's odorless and tasteless, and causes rats to die slowly of internal bleeding over several days. This delay means rats don't develop "bait-shyness." Warfarin is still used today, but rats have slowly developed resistance such that new "super-warfarins" have been created that pair the fast-acting features of ANTU with the effectiveness of blood thinners, though these often harm unintended targets such as birds or cats.

Long term, none of the poisons permanently reduce rat populations. Consider that, after humans, rats are the most successful invasive species on the planet as a result of their intelligence and adaptability. They exist in virtually every city in every country in the entire world. Centuries of rat control efforts, including the past 50 years of carpet-bombing our cities with poisons, have failed to eliminate them or even create a sustained reduction in rat numbers.

This is because poisons do little to fix the systemic and environmental factors that sustain wild rats. In other words, unless you kill all the rats everywhere—which won't happen—rats repopulate to the pre-poison levels within six months to a year of deployment ending. Thus, continuous deployment coupled with constantly innovated new poisons to counter rodent resistance and adaptation is required for poisons to work.

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The impact of poison-based management on rats themselves is worth our consideration: in cities across the world, sentient beings are dying slowly from internal bleeding, aware they and in pain and sick, and watching family members die, but unable to understand why. Beyond the directly harmed rats, poison disrupts to the remaining colonies' social fabric though vanishing friends and leaves many pups without parents. On a more macro level, the colonies have to constantly negotiate boom and bust rat population cycles as toxins are introduced then removed from areas.

Alternatives to War

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Like pigeons, rats are uniquely adaptable to human-made urban environments; they feel increased pain during human recessions. Google "rats" and "coronavirus," and you will discover how, perhaps more than any other wild species, rats have linked their lives to ours.

As a result of this proximity, wild rats create harmful waste, serve as disease vectors (although not for the Black Plague), spoil food, cause property damage and emotional stress for humans. Certain groups—immigrants, minorities, the poor—disproportionally live in neighborhoods impacted by rats. This is do due to a history of misguided and often discriminatory rodent management by landlords and municipalities. In Baltimore, where I live, the neighborhoods with current rat problems are almost identical to those that were "redlined" based on class and racial demographics decades ago. As a result of this impact, effective rodent control is both necessary to public health and an ethical responsibility.

Despite this, poison-focused rodent management is failing both affected human communities and the rats themselves. Biehler suggests that effective rodent control

requires holistic environmental justice solutions, which have rarely received the same investment as poisons. These tactics include community education, elimination of discriminatory housing practices that foster overcrowding; improved municipal sanitation collection; increased central-city investment; and enforcement of housing laws against negligent landlords. Environmental justice methods also marks a shift in strategic mentality. Supporters of traditional rodent control often evoke military language—a major DC initiative was even called the "War on Rats"—whereas environmental justice is focused on containment and co-existence.

The goal of environmental justice is not to help wild rats but to protect humans from unfair environmental burdens. Thus, these tactics would still reduce rodent population and shrink available territories. While some suggest expanding environmental justice goals to address human impacts on the non-human world, treating rats more humanely wouldn't even require re-centering the focus from human injustice. Rodent containment through human-focused environmental justice tactics already improves animal welfare. Although containment would lead to smaller rodent populations, the colonies that persisted would live with less disruption, and wouldn't suffer from confusing, slow deaths.

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Another more radical way to re-envision rodent control would be to provide wild rats with ideal "fancy burrows." Planners could calculate how many rats a territory is sustaining following environmental justice tactics, and install such structures based on this data. No food or other assistance would be provided, so the raw number of rats wouldn't increase, only the comfort of existing colonies. Moreover, the pact here would be that in exchange for the "fancy burrows," humans could monitor colony activity and, indeed, aggregate data across a city of unusual spikes in rodent death, which could be used by epidemiologists to predict pandemics and environmental changes.

As radical as this sounds, groups in Lisbon have recently done something similar for pigeons. They created fancy pigeon houses where residents are provided with food, safety and even occasional first aid. When the pigeons lay eggs, some are replaced with wooden eggs to control the pigeon population.

Such options only become possible after our disgust-driven wartime mindset is set aside, since aiding the enemy is anathema to battle.

Thought Experiment

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The traits of personhood that led me to love my rats have also disquieted me. I previously had separate mental buckets for pets and for pests, with rats lumped among various insects in terms of ethical concern. Our collective "othering" of rats as pests has

broad implications. Slaughtering humans is abhorrent; slaughtering livestock is mundane. Stray dogs are taken to shelters; stray rats are poisoned. (Animals labeled pets are still othered, just less so—many animals shelters euthanize stray dogs and cats; as seen with the Animal Welfare Act's protections, dogs' higher status is often powerful enough to provide them with a slightly less painful death).

Yet, if Harry, Vinnie and Gordo are individuals, then they logically have a right to their personal autonomy. And that further suggests that every rat on the street, in the lab and at breeders also have personalities that would emerge given time and circumstance.

Imagine if, overnight, humans everywhere treated each rat they encountered as autonomous beings worthy of respect for their bodily integrity. One possible outcome is that eventually rats that need to be relocated might even come willingly rather than needing to be caught. This might sound absurd, but recall how smart and social rats can be. Shortly before my own adoptions, my local rat rescue received a call from someone who recognized an abandoned domesticated rat in front of her glass sliding porch door, openly seeking human assistance. My girlfriend's first rat was a distressed domestic rat that came to her eagerly in the park.

Domesticated rats have been bred for socialization with humans, while wild rats aren't. Nonetheless, street rats are the same species as Harry, Vinnie and Gordo, and if every rat only had positive experiences with humans, one can easily imagine that strays would grow less wild within few generational life cycles; our interspecies relationship could evolve in something involving less pain and suspicion for both sides.

SECOND PLACE BARRY LOPEZ NONFICTION PRIZE

LAST SWEAT

Richard Hague

Autumn Equinox 2018, 71st Year of My Life

Yesterday a titmouse told me to fill the bird feeder. It had been empty since late spring, and I had only briefly glimpsed the usual year-round birds around the blazing, summer-stricken yard. But this one lighted on a shepherd's hook plant hanger, then tipped toward where I was sitting on the porch, and made its full call. I walked to the garage and scooped up a half-gallon of last March's feed and filled the squirrel-proof rig and soon the titmouse and a few chickadees were at it.

It was 93 degrees Fahrenheit just before I took shelter in the shade of the porch; I had been stooping over to gather ground cherries for my chef son Patrick to turn into some fermented ingredient or another and when I stood the sweat had near blinded me, running down my forehead, then dripping off my beard. The humidity made the heat index stand at over 100 degrees. I was a bit woozy.

Despite all my sweating, and despite the presence of the quick-growing, and heat-loving new okra plants I had started about a month before in hopes of stretching the season into what I call gumbo weather (roughly equivalent to the beginning of football season), tomorrow is the first day of Fall, astronomically speaking. I have no precise records, but it seems to me, a man outdoors many hours of the day from early spring on, that some of the seasons are shrinking, and some extending. Winters here have been generally brief and mild, with little snow, and the springs long and wet, although this year there was a run of unusually hot weather in April, followed by a wet, cold snap that set back some early spring crops. Now summer is running amuck.

And to be sweating so hard this close to Fall—it seems weird. Thankfully, the radishes, lettuces, and arugula I started back in August in flats under the shade of the porch are doing well, standing up to this weather as long as I keep them amply watered. But to have radishes growing in the same sun and heat as okra is indeed strange. I'll take it, but I don't know exactly what to make of it all.

Gardening is one of the chanciest of human endeavors. A friend of Mark Twain, Charles Dudley Warner wrote, "The principal value of a private garden is not understood. It is not to give the possessor vegetables and fruit (that can be better done

by the market-gardener), but to teach him patience and philosophy, and the higher virtues—hope deferred, and expectations blighted, leading directly to resignation, and sometimes to alienation. The garden thus becomes a moral agent, a test of character, as it was in the beginning."

I have long tended to agree with Warner, who shares some of Twain's sharp-witted sarcasm and occasional bitterness. But there is much to argue with in his passage: first, to call someone like me the "possessor" of my garden seems analogous to calling a sled dog the possessor of the sled. I am hitched to my garden by cables of labor and constant attention, and must be as dogged as any malemute on pull to attempt to keep it free of weeds, pests, and disease. It's more than a full-time operation, and I never feel ahead of the work. Second, the vegetables and fruit produced are indeed for me the very central idea. Over the last few years, besides what we have eaten, dried, frozen, or given to our neighbors, I have made more than $5,000 from those vegetables and fruits, socked away in a bank account for overseas travel—Ireland again, I hope. Surely, I have been rough-schooled in those "higher virtues" Warner speaks of. At the end of last season, for example, I seriously considered quitting vegetable and fruit gardening, even telling a couple of my neighbors that they could take over the beds if they chose to. "I'm getting too old for this," I complained. "I'm past the limit of one manpower." But come late winter, there I was again in the basement, starting seeds under lights, and ordering more raspberry and strawberry plants, and on clear days lurking at the edges of my frosty beds.

So yesterday, I realized as I looked at the weather forecast, might have been the occasion of the last big sweat I'd work up in this year's garden. I'd picked forty pounds of winter squash, two and half quarts of ground cherries (thank you, Aunt Molly, whoever you are, for giving your name to this variety), some late tomatoes of several varieties, a pint of Heritage raspberries, a pound of Roma green beans, a handful of French Breakfast radishes, and six or eight fingers of Clemson Spineless Okra. Dropping the baskets and containers on the kitchen counter and pulling the chain to get the overhead fan going, I sat cooling at the table and looked over the bounty.

I am a bit crazy, it is quite clear. I go hatless in the high summer in my gardens, risking heat prostration and dehydration and the constant kind nag about these dangers by my wife. But to make money and meals from what I have grown myself is so deeply satisfying as to counteract for me all the "misery and resignation" Warner learned from his garden.

On our trip to Ireland a few years ago, my wife and I were moved by the hardscrabble conditions that still prevail around the "famine house" ruins along the west of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. How could our ancestors (we're both fully half Irish) have possibly eked out their existences from such windswept, steep, and rocky fields?

The result of such a contrast has been my increased appreciation for the abundance we are blessed with in our own gardens. Despite the outbreaks of Harlequin bugs that arrive in late summer and fall to ravage cole crops, and the sudden demise of formerly flourishing squash vines, and the nibbling down to bare stems of the sweet potato vines by city-emboldened deer, we truly are beneficiaries of the Midwest-Bordering-on-the- South cornucopia. The sweat pays off. The coming days of cool and dry weather which make October my favorite month in our part of the world are the beginning of relief. The turn of the summer to autumn is to the spirit as a cold shower is to the body, as a good bowl of hearty gumbo is to the famished.

October 7

The forecast for today warns of a record-breaking high for this date, 86 F. Most of the squash vines are giving up, obviously not from lack of warmth, but from old age, I believe. They are just worn out and no frost has arrived to put them finally out of their misery. I carried water to one set of beds yesterday, and the onions, radishes, lettuces, a few scattered beets set out a bit earlier and the various autumn-ripening peppers are trucking along. The last raspberries are cooling it in the refrigerator, as well as some early okra pods from the plants I set out at the beginning of September as a kind of in-joke between myself and climate change. And here they are, with their lovely pale yellow hibiscus-like blooms, their fans of leaves.

Every fall reminds me of both the tenacity of things and of their inevitable ruin. Now that I have achieved my Biblical three score and ten, I note the details with a heightened mild anxiety. Yes, the turn of the seasons promises, there will soon enough be spring and summer again; yes, these cycles are permanent. But this hot and long summer, lingering now into autumn without abating, sends a pre-verbal, almost cellular warning. “It’s just wrong,” I say to myself. “This heat is weird.” Sometimes our bodies speak a language far closer allied to the earth and wind and rain and soil than our brains can know. For all our roofs and fans and air conditioners, the world of plants and animals remains wild and unpredictable. In the end, this is somehow bracing to me; I take it as a sign that I have not fully mastered anything, have not been fully domesticated, not been fully ruined as an animal, and that for the reptile-brained fraction of me, a garden, though the height of human artifice, is still a part of a finally incomprehensible and exhilarating planetary pageant.

October 16

I have just collected the last cash from selling 10 pounds of various sweet

peppers to my son Patrick over the past week. He is chef de cuisine of a somewhat odd hybrid business called Dutch's Larder. It consists of three parts: a beer dock, which is almost exactly as old as I am, and which is stocked with around four hundred brands of beer, all available as a single can or bottle, or as a mixed six-pack, or in case-loads, if desired. Next door to this primitive walk-up off the sidewalk is a nicely appointed, quite contemporary Wine Bar, featuring not only prime vintages but a dozen or so draft beers from all over, the selection changing weekly. Then comes The Larder, a redeemed Starbuck's, with a flat top and some ovens, with which Patrick cooks his ever-changing menu of rillets, terrines, house-smoked sausages and bacon, and stunning soups. The oddness of his place, its out-of-the-box organization, the local and seasonal excellence of his cooking: admirable. I will come back in a few days to find out what those peppers have been transformed into, and the variety and unpredictability of it all increases for me my garden's importance and power.

Halloween

Remembering past Halloweens, when Patrick and Brendan were still bag-toting, costumed boys (one year they went as trees, another as hoboes) I recall the mix of snow and fallen leaves we walked through on the sidewalks of our neighborhood. But today, raking pine needles to mulch the garden paths, I break a sweat again. I wear two layers, a t-shirt and a corduroy long-sleeve, but I could have shed the outer shirt and still been a bit moist. The temperature is around 60 in mid-morning, with a forecast of a high at 65. My neighbor Willy Gardner still has lots of pods on the okra plants in his front yard, though he complains about the groundhogs, (or was it deer?) which have eaten all his collards overnight. Just a couple of weeks ago he gave me a watermelon, usually associated with high summer. This late September one grew in his front yard, around the stump of a grandfather ash tree that had to be taken down two summers ago, part of the great Die-Off in which millions of ash trees (how can I even write this with equanimity?) over this part of the country succumbed. These days, I have been chopping at the massive but younger ash stump in my backyard; its five-or-six-year old rotting remains, which come away in great chunks, are the color of redwood. Since they are too damp to burn in the chiminea, I bag them and will drop them off at the county yard waste recycling center two miles away.

Our ash tree was probably the descendant or a sibling of Willy's. I put off counting the rings of its trunk until they were obscured by decay; every once in while, I do something as profoundly stupid as this, and I never seem to learn. This has been true since many animals died under my supposed care during my boyhood: the Hague-induced extinction list in Steubenville included a spectacled cayman, doomed to expire

ignobly against the baseboard under my bed, several anoles (marketed by Woolworth's as "chameleons"), talented escape artists that more often than not could be spotted, before their sunken-bellied, desiccated demise, in a spot of sunlight on the back of the living room sofa, and several turtles, perishing usually of a lengthy, reptilian starvation. I had a rabbit once, penned next to the backyard shed; it too was a victim of irregular care and infection and cold.

This death-dealing gene, fortunately, did not pass on to my son Brendan. He once had a guinea pig that lived, it seemed, for a decade, and he currently is host not only to Brisket, his bulldog, Huckleberry, his Labrador-bloodhound mix, but most admirably to Kickstand, a three-legged box turtle he rescued from the roadside when just a teenager. Brendan is now 31, and still dropping worms, crickets, celery greens, cherry tomatoes, and berries into Kickstand's well-lit domain in the dining room's front window. His fiancée Rachel is also a fan of this stolid tripod of a reptile.

The English poet Ted Hughes once described November as "the month of the drowned dog." One day shy of that month, the afternoon here in Madisonville turns wet, but stays warm, and the poet's image loses power in this temperate surround. There is something in me that expects cold, mangy hound weather, wants it, even, though I remain seduced by the balmy breezes this morning, and by the newly turning trees: the Autumn Blaze maple we planted to replace the ash tree, and the cross-street magnificent Scarlet Oak.

Last night, we made pizza using, among other things, green bell peppers from the garden, basil pesto I'd made and frozen at the height of summer, and a dried garden cayenne pepper, crushed, seeded, and sprinkled over the top. It had "wang" as we have called red pepper hot for years, the term introduced into our culinary vocabulary by our friend David Stratman, who despite his German heritage, had a yen for hot Asian stuff. An annual dim sum lunch in Boston's Chinatown was a Stratman family holiday tradition for generations, and in the narrow stretch between his house and the next in Jamaica Plain, David always grew a few tomato plants. Oddly enough, I don't recall hot peppers.

These miscellaneous reminiscences and could-be footnotes are among the other harvests I gather from my gardens, especially in the last weeks of the growing season. An urge to take stock comes over me; I make notes in my garden log, pick the final vegetables and berries, deposit the late dollars, and at last get back to my writing more or less full-time. Since the day I filled the bird feeder when the titmouse called, I have already gone through forty pounds of birdseed (The Economy Mix from the redoubtable Newtown Feed and Supply) and six blocks of suet. The squabbling caucuses of house sparrows give way now and then to quieter pairs of chickadees and

titmice, the occasional nuthatch, the downy and hairy and red-headed woodpeckers, and the big flicker that amazes me by pecking seeds out of the feeder after gorging on suet, an action akin to eating peas with greasy chopsticks.

I think of making gumbo. I put on my down vest and launch into the garden for final clean up. Except for a few hours of leaf-raking and mulching, and unless climate change and local warming are already at a crisis point here, the days of sweat, for a time, are over.

Thanksgiving

On the pot of yellow mums on the back porch steps, as my wife and I are leaving to drive north for Thanksgiving Day in Columbus, a Red Admiral butterfly—or is it a Painted Lady?— is inspecting those flowers. This after several hard frosts. Information I have found affirms that the Red Admiral is a late-flying insect in late fall, as the Mourning Cloak is one of the first to be seen in late winter and early spring in these parts. In England, the Red Admiral often flies on warm winter days. Here, it is just a month or so to Christmas, but there is this butterfly, and there are clouds of gnats, glinting motes of silver in patches of backyard sunlight. Do I see one of those ubiquitous wall lizards, escapees from a contraband clutch brought from Italy by a member of the Lazarus department store clan, skittering along the stone wall of my garden?

With such apparent anomalies as these, and with the annual variations always arising in the garden, I understand that there is no certainty except in the largest movements and cycles. But, as a matter of fact, that is not true, either. Winter does not always give way to spring, or summer to winter. Events like volcanic eruptions and asteroid strikes have demonstrably altered the usual cycles, setting off the equivalents of nuclear-winter ice ages and mass extinctions or, on the other hand, long periods of warming caused by the release of prodigious amounts of methane and sulfur by undersea earthquakes and eruptions. More recently it is us, with all our greenhouse gas emissions, who are responsible. Thus the naming this new Age of the earth the **An**thropocene.

So at the Columbus Thanksgiving family gathering there were two huge and cooked-for-hours turkeys, gallons of mashed potatoes, quarts of gilded-lily sweet potatoes sweetened even further with brown sugar and pecans, green beans, rolls, stuffing, mincemeat pie, pumpkin pie, apple pie, pecan bars, and dozens of various cookies. There were shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico, flown or trucked in to the heart of sea-less Ohio. A charcuterie board loaded with cheeses from France, salumis from

Genoa and Tuscany, olives from Castlevetrano. How many BTUs had been expended in the getting and making of all this? What was this huge meal's carbon footprint? I tried to visualize all the energy required in several ovens and grills and in the engines of delivery vehicles ranging from jets to big trucks, and in all the family members' cars and vans come in from all over, as one consolidated fire: perhaps the same amount of flame as would consume a small suburban block, or a whole subdivision of trees, a mini-firestorm that, had it actually happened, would have become a part of family and neighborhood lore for generations. "The Big Turkey Fire." "The Great Thanksgiving Burn."

That we have had such a brobdignagian effect is at once astonishing and inevitable: according to the writer of "The Insect Apocalypse is Here," which recently appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, insect life may be collapsing at what should be a hysteria-inducing rate, not just in the tropical zones, but in Europe, in North America. Though controversial, the report has jump-started a tense discussion about how extensive the decline of insects—and thousands, if not millions of other animals and plants—currently is. Hardly anybody thinks of the effects of the loss of insect pollinators, such an unlikely enjambment of the food cycle, but it is akin to really understanding the coming global climate change's effects.

So I keep this local, personal record, as a chronicle, a confession, and a warning. A chronicle of what these changes that are happening in my own lifetime look like at the ground level, in my yard, in my gardens. It is also a reminder and confession to my own family and friends, whose perceptions of me are primarily "green," what with my dedication to urban gardening and local sourcing of food. But I still use air conditioning, and refrigeration, and gasoline. I still fire up my chain saw now and then, even as I know that with some sweat and persistence, I could probably cut that limb, or hand saw that firewood. But I don't. And as a result, I contribute my little bit, bit by bit along with billions of other people's little bits bit by bit, to the problem. We feed climate change with the brief, seemingly innocent mundanities of modern life, and it grows like a cancer cell.

Last sweat. Record first freeze. Earliest heat wave. Latest May hard frost. Such tags will continue to accumulate in these garden notes I keep, these minor revelations of personal and environmental sightings and discoveries. And it is true, undeniable, that they sometimes could be read as self-indictments. Despite all my sweat and hand labor, despite all the green I have planted and tended and composted, despite my intentions to contribute to the planet's health in my miniscule and temporary way, I am daily reminded how complicit I am in the ruin: as far as the causes and causers of climate change go, I'm indicted by own words and actions: truth be told, it takes one to know one.

HONORABLE MENTION, BARRY LOPEZ NONFICTION PRIZE

A MOMENT TO BREATHE

K. Kaimilani Leota Sellers

I'm feeling triggered today.

About the election?

Yes.

Maybe we can talk later.

Yes, we can! I'm feeling hopeful about the election.

That's good. I know 45 will fight it. I already see his minions posting. Some of them are so dumb.

LOL, yes, but it will be futile. People are crazy.

:)

I took a trip around the Big Island of Hawaii today, where I live. Without stopping it would be a six-hour trip, but because I had to stop for errands it took all day. As I was driving, the text dialogue with my girlfriend, E, who lives 4,000 miles away in Lexington, Kentucky, kept spinning through my head. I mean, the word *triggered* is triggering. For me, triggering infers memories of rape. And I get that, because when President #45 took office, I was triggered. How in the world could someone who had so much disregard for women be the leader of the free world? There was no doubt in my mind that he had taken advantage of women, maybe even raped women, "grabbed them by the pussy." Like much of the country, I was deeply depressed about his election for weeks, for months, for years. I won't say his name, I won't look at his pictures, I really don't want to listen to him. His voice scrapes vulnerable places in my body. Everything about him screams rape. I won't post anything about him on social media. Am I the only one? I don't want him on my social media page taking up any of my space. In the Beginning of 2016, after he was elected, I spent all my spare time writing, and crying, and doing

abstract art until I felt like I had vomited enough bile from my being, for a time. Maybe after four years of his presidency, I was able to become desensitized, numb to the misogynistic circus master who was taking up residence in the White House. Or, I was protecting myself from the outrageous behavior that some American people felt encouraged to commit in his name.

When my girlfriend says *triggered* it means more.

Are you afraid?

Yes

When we spoke the night before, on a social media video, she was curled up in bed, and I was curled up with my ipad. She looked soft in her blankets, but I could sense her sadness, her anxiety. I wished I could be there to comfort her, wrap around her, breathe with her. She didn‘t have to say much. I knew what was going on in her mind.

On the media outlets, there were scenes of #45‘s minions chanting and yelling at the sites where polls were being counted, rabid foaming and scratching, ready to spill blood, ready to rip down doors and destroy evidence of #45‘s losing numbers. “Stop the count, Stop the count, Stop the count,” might as well have meant, “Kill people of color, Kill people of color, Kill people of color.” Or, “Don‘t let them breathe, Don‘t let them breathe, Don‘t let them breathe.” Or, “Put babies in cages, Put babies in cages, Put babies in cages.” Or, “Dismember their families, Dismember their families, Dismember their families.” They came out in wolf packs to create fear, to keep POC from voting, arms of the spectres associated with burning churches, burning crosses, hooded vigilantes, and hangings. This time they were out in the open, hatred out of the closet. Brazenly.

For some, not much has changed over the centuries. #45 brought out the darkness that had been lying in wait, darkness that salivated, waiting for this time when a leader, like Hitler, like #45, would call them into service. Demon dogs, ready to leap from their leashes. #45 reached out to them in public, “Stand back and stand by.” Those “Proud Boys” were ready to slash and burn at his command, and the uneducated white masses joined them, incapable of knowing truth from fiction. White Jesus be damned.

All this time, people have spoken up about how powerful white men were using violence, prison, covert operations, police force to commit vicious deaths against Black men, women, and children. Those who would protect the white boys would respond with

something like, “Oh, but why, why are you pulling out that race card? Again? Why are you accusing the good men and women in blue for killing black people who are drug addicts and general scum of the earth? Why do you keep saying Black Lives Matter when All Lives Matter?”

Well, if you have to ask you just don‘t understand your own privilege. You just don‘t get the hatred that is spewed every day. But E does. E feels it all. E is a registered nurse who has been educated, who reads, who works every day to save the lives of all people, though in her heart she has to keep reminding herself that Black Lives Matter. Every day, she tries to forget that out of the house, she and her son are not safe in Kentucky. Breonna Taylor is proof of that. Breonna Taylor was killed in her own house, legally, by the police of Louisville, Kentucky.

E is triggered.

Upright Republican people, who are “not racist,” say that it isn‘t #45 that they are voting for, but the cut in taxes. And I get that, I get that, but...they are not E.

I moved back to Hawaii for a few reasons, but the main reason was to take my youngest son out of my ex-husband‘s hands. He was 23 years-old, struggling with mental illness and substance abuse. His father was ready to throw him out on the streets. There was shouting, swearing, angry, hurtful words infecting the household. My son refused to move to the Mainland, US contiguous states, to be with me, so I moved back to Hawaii in emergency mode, during a pandemic. E remained in Kentucky because she has family members of her own that she needs to attend to: a mother and a son. We decided we would try to make a go at being together long distance. I don‘t know how long we think this will last, but we are trying. In these days of political chaos and Covid-19, support, love, and connection are vital.

“Let‘s watch a movie on Netflix.”

I set up my computer and she set up her computer, and after we chose a movie we wanted to watch, she counted down--three, two, one, and we both hit play at the same time. I could see her on my ipad, she could see me on her iphone. It was almost as good as being there together, commenting on the movie, laughing. Sometimes I watch her more than I watch the movie. Missing her. Memorizing lines in her face. As usual, she falls asleep first, and I can hear her light snoring on my small screen.

Six hours of driving gives you time to think:

1) Buy bags of poi from the roadside poi stand in Hawi, the old Hawaiian man with a long white ponytail gave me a free bag the first time. Family business he says, poi made from green-veined taro grown in lush Waipio Valley, roots in ancient soil, leaf tops facing sun and rain.

2) Meet my older son in Ocean View, an almost lava barren mountain slope where the community continues to grow. Loan him money so he can buy an old white Ford f150 truck to use for his new business, subcontracting. His full-time job is working at the National Park, a park ambassador. But this new part-time business will “help make ends meet, so we will have more money for our little girls.”

3) Stop at my pregnant daughter‘s work-place just to say hello, give her a good hug, give her a bag of poi. Exclaim how cute her baby sonogram is. The baby looks like it could be a boy, but the photo is cut off by the genitalia area. He/She has a Polynesian profile. Cute nose, full lips. “Eat poi, and make that baby strong,” I tell her. Help him grab roots in the soil.

4) Drop by my other daughter‘s workplace to say hello to her. She is also working two jobs. She works at a bank during the week, takes online college courses in accounting, and works at a small *Mom and Pop* store on Saturdays. Needless-to-say, I am proud of her. She will have her BA in the spring. Her boyfriend is working two jobs as well.

5) Stop by the property I am in the process of purchasing, with money gained through the Kentucky Teacher‘s Retirement fund. This half-acre parcel of land is near Volcano Village, a hot spot for writers, artists, teachers, and scientists. The plan is to take a few steps into the woods to get a lay out of the land. Literally. Take pictures with my phone. Absorb energy.

6) Stop off at my 87-year-old mother‘s elderly apartment complex to pick her up to go to the store.

7) Go to an electronic store in Hilo to pick up some compressed air so that my youngest son can fix his game player device. He has no job and is living with me.

Then, there is the road to watch: the straight flat road that leads to Kailua, Kona from Kohala, the winding snake road from Kona to Ka`u, the road down-hill from Volcano to Hilo, the Hamakua coast road with the horseshoes that look like they could send you crashing into an untimely death. And finally, the road from Waimea back to Kohala, another treacherous cliffside road down Kohala Mountain. This is a full day‘s

ride. I needed to get back before dark, because the Kohala Mountain road is barely visible at night. I had plenty on my mind to keep me occupied between stops.

The word, *triggered*, is a loaded weapon, one that takes aim, a splay of arrows swiftly striking in all directions, at any time. My girlfriend is Black. For her, this was not just any election. This was a moment of reckoning, either of doom or of transformation.

After Breonna Taylor, After George Floyd, E couldn‘t watch social media, she could barely even speak about it. I felt her apprehension, her revulsion of the topic whenever I brought these topics up, and realized I had to respect her silence. Despite the fact, that I am a person of color, I am not Black. I have never experienced having the history of slavery tied to my back. Every taunt, every injustice, every outrageous move of #45 that he used to normalize racism, normalize the KKK, the Proud Boys, is yet another slash of the whip, another rape against an unarmed black woman, girl, child.

#45 empowered the same illness that lined the pockets of the plantation masters, years ago, today. The strangling of, the suffocating of, the silencing of, the attack of the oppressed. Black Lives Matter marched against them, against the stain that was/is America. In this vocal uprising that said, “We won‘t take this anymore,” people like Charles Booker of Kentucky and Stacey Abrams in Georgia became powerful voices, rallying Black people to come out, to fight back politically and not physically, to bite the master‘s hand where it hurts, at the polls, where Republicans tried to stop them through voter suppression.

“I‘m triggered,” E said, as she prepared for another 12-hour shift as a nurse, as she prepared to take care of the deathly ill and dying, white and black, Republican and Democrat. In that context, of death, did history really matter? I remember many times when she came home, tears in her eyes, with the death of a patient on her mind, patients of different races.

“I‘m triggered.” She said, referring to the talk of Republican nurses who chatted about their #45, unaware of the way it made her feel. How she feared for her own safety, how she feared for the safety of her adult, black, son. Any day, any time, her son could be the next George Floyd. Any day, any time, police could intrude the house on false pretense. Like they did to my son when he was 21 years old. Later he told me that seven police broke down the door, shouting for him to put his hands behind his head. Two years later, he rarely leaves the house.

Today, when I drove around the island, I didn‘t hear from E, though I texted her whenever I made a stop, checking in. It bothered me a little. It is hard to carry on a long-distance relationship. I am five hours behind. By the time I wake up, she has already lived half a day. When she goes to sleep, I am still up writing, or working, or watching a movie on my own. Today, I knew she was watching the election results. She was posting in a flurry of political responses about the Biden/Harris Elects. Everyone had waited for days. She posted images of Kamala Harris and Joe Biden, with positive messages of hope. She was bound up in the surge of emotional release that washed people into tears and hyper patriotism while I was out driving. A part of me felt that I had missed a pivotal moment in her life. I was even jealous, thinking that if she wasn‘t sharing this important day with me, if she hadn‘t felt the urge to share this moment of victory with me, then she must be sharing it with someone else. How selfish of me for not guarding her silence. How selfish of me to think that any of her silence had anything to do with me.

I know she was a little irritated with me. Though I am a Democrat, I criticized Joe Biden at first. I didn‘t think he was the right pick for the Democratic party—another old white guy. I called him “Sleepy” before #45 did. I am a Democrat when it comes to social issues, but I also understand why Republicans want less taxes, want more take-home pay. I mean, except for my youngest, my children are all working two jobs to make ends meet. Barely. One third of each of my paychecks is taken out for medical and taxes. I am a teacher with a graduate degree who is living paycheck-to-paycheck. Despite my qualms for higher taxes, however, I would never in a million years vote for a cruel, racist, misogynistic #45, one who grabs pussys when he wants them, and puts children in cages because they and their parents were desperately seeking a better life than they could find in Mexico, or another Central American country.

Maybe I got under E‘s skin when I told her that Biden didn‘t energize me. It was the trigger. A Black woman fearful of being attacked, simply because she is Black, does not have the privilege to choose a President other than one who will promise her that she will be safe, that her children will be safe. I get that. Black women are the most oppressed human beings in the universe. If you are going to choose between life for you and your family, or less taxes, the answer is life. I have to check my own privilege. I have to protect those who I love. Those white Republican nurses that work with her...don‘t understand that. Or they wouldn‘t trigger her very real feelings of endangerment every day when she goes to work.

Harris was actually my top pick before the primary. Her sticker, “Courage Not Courtesy,” is still on the back of my car. In fact, E used to tease me about having a

crush on both Kamala Harris and Tulsi Gabbard, both who I had strong respect for. Now that Harris is the Vice President Elect, E has posted half a dozen articles and memes of Harris on her social media page. It makes me giggle a little. I was always a Kamala Harris fan.

Yesterday, E asked me, “Who do you think is smarter, Kamala Harris or Rachel Maddow?”

“Both are smart in their own way.” How could I choose? If I really had to, it would be Harris of course. Yes, I did vote for Biden/Harris, and I have to admit that later, when I reached home, I did listen to Biden, and felt the kindness, openness, hopefulness, and inclusivity in his speech. I am going to be honest, though, deep down I voted for Harris, because she is smart and savvy. I believe in her authenticity. I believe she can get things done. I speculate that Kamala Harris will be the first Woman, Black, Asian President of the U.S. one day. She energizes me.

Today, as I stopped to take driving breaks, I checked my phone, checked social media, read as people were celebrating, banging pots in D.C., as they listened to Biden and Harris speak, posting comment after comment of expressions of joy and hope. My immediate focus was on the road, on my adult children, and on the land in Volcano, a forest dripping with rain. I came out of the woods smelling like bark and spongy moss. I felt silent inside. Wet from rain, I sat in my car watching the rain splatter, looking at the fern trees through misted glasses. I was almost afraid to believe that the news was really true. I was also anxious and worried that tomorrow I might wake up and find that the ballot counts were wrong, that someone had cheated, that our country would be wrapped back up with the Klansmen and the Proud Boys, that there would be violent clashes, that there would be deaths. I wondered what E thought, but she was at work and I had not heard any personal comments from her.

On the way home, there was an accident on the highway and a grueling rerouting through one-way backroads, bumper-to-bumper, in the rain, in the mud, inches from cars going the opposite direction. I was glad to get out of that mess. Glad to finally get home in the dark, and unload my car, unpack my emotions, see that my son was in a positive upswing. I immediately opened my computer to watch the speeches of our President and Vice President Elect.

Soon, E, and hundreds of thousands of strong Black women across our nation, can begin to feel safe, in a country that became wealthy from the labor of their loins, and the backs of their sons. Talk about the economy. Once there were people who legally worked under the whip, and under the belly of rich, white, plantation men. The

people labored without pay, labored as spouses and children were stolen away in the name of money. In this election, 2020, you want to talk about stolen votes? Let‘s talk about the stolen children of slavery, who have risen, who have spoken today. With almost 50% of the nation voting for #45, let‘s be honest. This is a reprieve. This is a moment to breathe, to get stronger, but no moment to let your guard down. Check your privilege.

I finally got to talk to E after work today. She feels relieved about the political climate, about immigrant children, about laws that will support people of color, about the environment, but in her heart, in her bones, she knows as well as I do, there is hard work to be done, and danger in every step.

“Did you see the meme about all the red states where Black people shouldn‘t go?” she laughs quietly and shakes her head, eyes already drooping with exhaustion.

“No,” I said. I watched her fall asleep on my ipad, after days of working 12-hour shifts back-to-back, after days of political anxiety, she was knocked out, bundled in a comforter, her glasses askew on her face, soft snores from her open lips, her lights still on, and a faint flicker of her laptop.

It is winter in Kentucky, but tonight, my girlfriend is warm and safe.

HONORABLE MENTION BARRY LOPEZ NONFICTION PRIZE

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE TO REGENERATE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: MARLON FOSTER

Stephen Erickson

(note: this essay is about Marlon Foster. He is not the author.)

Marlon Foster

“There was a moment for me, I was eighteen, nineteen, just a kid really.” Marlon Foster lies on his back in the grass, staring up at the clouds. He is unable to rise. This hurts as much as any loss he has ever suffered. More.

“My best friend had just been shot to death.”

He regards passing clouds, not surmising shape or seeking sign, breathing, as they seem to be, reflecting. “We’d do everything together. Pierre and I sang together in the church choir. On the football team he was the quarterback, I was the wide receiver. In track running the 4 by 400, I’d run the first leg and he was always the one I’d hand the baton to. I was this entrepreneurial kid. I was the kid with the lemonade stand. I had an uncle who worked at a make-up distributor so in junior high they called me the ‘Avon

lady' because I was selling make-up to the girls. But Pierre was the really smart, really savvy one.

"I see so many kids now who are quick on their feet, smart, sharp witted and it's all about taking those natural gifts and directing them in the right way. My best friend was that to the nth degree. No telling how successful in business he could have been.

"The middle school we went to, Bellevue, had a mix of kids, middle class and poor. Kids would check one another. One of my first days I sat down at a table and the kids started checking each other over who stayed in a one story versus a two-story house. I got up and kinda slipped away before they asked me. So, we figured a way. We had this Izod shirt. Every day we would take the emblem off that shirt and sew it on another shirt for another one of us to wear. It was Pierre's idea to *also* sew the Izod collar tag in the back. People would call you on your Izod shirt, and sure enough kids would grab your collar and see if you got this fake thing going on by looking in the back. Just taking that much time and attention, trying to be ingenious just to fit in.

"Laying in the grass looking up at the clouds. My best friend was gone… I was having thoughts like 'I don't even want to be here any longer myself,' I was so distraught. I turned my head to the side and there was a little blade of grass, right by my eye, just blowing in the wind. And there was something in that moment, this little thin blade of grass… It has life in it. I just began to value life on a whole different level."

And Marlon rose. He stood up with a resolve, "I want my life to honor his."

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Today Marlon Foster walks amidst seven-foot tall sunflowers, their glowing yellow crowns of petals vivid in morning sun. Green onions, Swiss chard, Traviata eggplant, bell peppers, habaneros, jalapeños, and red tie chilis flourish in raised long beds surrounding us. Deeply evocative scents — of the plants, of their blossoms and of the fertile soil — rise together on the humid air in this beautiful place.

Marlon is now 46, a handsome man, well groomed, dressed sharply today in pressed long sleeve shirt and tie. He smiles proudly. These vegetables growing from the dark rich soil, are even more robust than last year's and he anticipates record yields. Ahead of us, several greenhouses are staggered, set amidst more long rectangular raised plant beds on this acre of the farm. We walk shifting alongside garlic, cucumbers, Clemson spineless okra, emerald tomatillos, beets and carrots. Summer is arriving, which means that also in-season are three kinds of tomatoes - sun golds, black cherries, and heirloom Cherokee purples. I do see one hundred shades of green.

This is Green Leaf Learning Farm, an urban farm in South Memphis, Tennessee.

We are standing amidst some of the most nutritious food on this planet. Nothing on this farm will worsen diabetes, not one plant growing here will harm your heart or your circulation or put you at greater risk of cancer, neuropathy or dementia. Just the

opposite. All of the food growing within the waist-high green border fences of Green Leaf Learning Farm will nurture and sustain everyone who eats it, improving their health, vitality, and mental clarity. Marlon's vegetables, fruits, and flowers enrich lives.

Just outside the fence, it changes.

We also happen to be standing in an American food desert: 38126, the poorest urban zip code in the entire United States. The unemployment rate is high, the median household income well below poverty level. There is not a single supermarket or grocery store within the entire community.

Marlon was born and raised in this neighborhood. When he graduated from the local college he had career opportunities elsewhere but he chose to stay. Compassionate activism inspired a vision and he built all of this.

Forty people now work with Marlon. Green Leaf Learning Farm's produce is in high demand. They sell out most of what they take to farmer's markets. His food boxes nourish neighborhood families and contain exercise coupons and other incentives to make healthy lifestyle choices. The interest in home-cooked meals, plant strong meals and healthy eating is slowly returning to this community, this food desert. Counselors at Knowledge Quest, the community center he started, are saving lives and instilling hope.

"I look at our farm and our community center, its value set, my compassion that developed despite all this death of humans around me — I can trace it all back to that blade of grass."-

. . .

Esteemed author, poet, and farmer Wendell Berry believes livelihood as a vocation is one's calling: "For all persons there are specific kinds of work to which they are summoned by God or by their natural gifts or talents. The kind of work may be cabinet-making or music-making, cooking or forestry, medicine or mechanics, science or law or philosophy or farming… People who are doing the work they are called to do are happy doing it. For them there is no distinction between work and pleasure. A 'job,' by contrast, is understood as any work whatever that one can earn money by doing."[2]

There is a profound, soul-fulfilling essence to livelihood. It's in part subconscious: discovering the calling that feeds and nourishes your soul, the inner certainty that this is the endeavor, the work, the life-labor that you are here, in this life, to engage in and do.

For Wendell Berry husbandry resides at the core of livelihood. "The word 'husbandry' is the name of a connection… To husband is to use with care, to keep, to save, to make last, to conserve." There is husbandry "of the land, of the soil, of the

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[2] Wendell Berry, *The Art of Loading Brush*, Berkeley, California: Counterpoint, 2017 pgs. 78-79

domestic plants and animals — obviously because of the importance of these things to the household." Husbandry is "the art of keeping tied all the strands in the living network that sustains us."[3]

Green Leaf Learning Farm is Marlon's livelihood, his passion. This farm, located in the poorest urban zip code in the United States, is thriving — so why is it the vast majority of farms throughout rural America aren't?

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Communities across America today are so depressed that 55% of U.S. zip codes are defined as food deserts — areas where residents don't have local access to supermarkets, let alone healthy food. If you do not have a single supermarket or supercenter within a mile of your urban home, or within 10 miles if you live in a rural area, you live in a food desert.[4] Dr. Joel Fuhrman, 7 times New York Times bestselling author, notes "When grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other healthy food providers aren't available, the corner store or fast food restaurant becomes the primary source of nutrition, particularly for people who don't own a car… They sell commercial foods that create health problems. Imagine going into your local corner store and finding that every item on the shelf is unsafe for prolonged human consumption. That is the stark reality for more than 29 million Americans and 8 million children."[5]

According to Feeding America, 2.7 million rural households now face hunger, 75% of the counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are rural, and 86% of counties with the highest rates of *child* food insecurity are rural.[6] Key indicators of socioeconomic lack of well-being including unemployment rates, disability, divorce, teen pregnancy, crime, and death rates from heart disease, cancer, suicide, and drug abuse, are now higher in rural America than in America's inner cities.[7]

John Ikerd writes in *The Economic Colonization of Rural America*, "When the

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[3] Wendell Berry, *Renewing Husbandry,* Orion Magazine, June, 2018, https://orionmagazine.org/article/renewing-husbandry/

[4] The State of Obesity. *Food Insecure Children*, https://stateofobesity.org/food-insecurity/

[5] Joel Fuhrman, M.D., *Fast Food Genocide*, New York, New York: Harper Collins, 2017 pgs. 154-6.

[6] Feeding America, *Millions of Rural Children Struggle With Hunger*, FeedingAmerica.org, https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/rural-hunger-facts

[7] Janet Adamy and Paul Overberg, *Rural America is the New 'Inner City'*, The Wall Street Journal, May 26, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/rural-america-is-the-new-inner-city-1495817008

sense of community is lost, the sense of common commitment and shared hope for the future is lost."[8]

The reason why rural communities have become increasingly impoverished is the loss of small family farms. There were 6.8 million farms in the United States in 1935. Less than 2.1 million remain today. For every two farms that go out of business, one small-town business closes its doors.

The reason rural communities today have *no chance* of economic recovery is Big Agriculture and its behemoth dark twins: industrial agriculture and factory farming.

Industrial agriculture dominates 231 million American crop acres, the vast majority of American cropland. Modern farms, which have expanded vastly in size need very few workers to operate. That is by design. Industrial agriculture forces farmers to incur high input costs — the purchase and use of Roundup Ready GMO seed and its attendant suite of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides — money that is paid to international corporations far removed from the farmer's community. Very little money remains in a farm's operating budget to be spent within the local community and support the local economy.

Big Ag severs livestock from pastures, forces small farmers off their land, and divorces community small business owners from solvency. "Most and perhaps all of industrial agriculture's manifest failures appear to be the result of an attempt to make the land produce without husbandry," observes Wendell Berry. "The attempt to remake agriculture as a science and an industry has excluded from it the age-old husbandry which was central and essential to it."[9]

Big Ag operates as an extractive process. It purchases the raw materials out of a local economy or region, while over time, gaining economic control over their origin, the farms and farming practices, to secure this flow while lowering cost as much as possible. Reducing the number of farms and farmers extinguishes any possible collective bargaining power they might have discovered they had and solidifies this economic control over the minority who remain.

Because farming families no longer produce food for themselves and their community, food must now be brought in from afar to supply any grocery stores that remain as well as the budget-priced fast food outlets and restaurant chains in this struggling and increasingly impoverished community. The money from the sale of this food is also largely destined for distant corporations — it no longer circulates in the local

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[8] John Ikerd, *The Economic Colonization of Rural America*, Daily Yonder, Feb. 28, 2018, https://www.dailyyonder.com/economic-colonization-rural-america/2018/02/28/24068/

[9] Wendell Berry, *Renewing Husbandry,* Orion Magazine, June, 2018, https://orionmagazine.org/article/renewing-husbandry/

economy. Remaining residents in the towns and surrounding countryside now have to drive to Walmart or another super-center that aggregates the things they need. These goods are also not made locally but brought into the area from elsewhere, their purchase siphoning more revenue from the region. Cash-strapped denizens are offered cheaper and cheaper goods — a path descending to the cheapest possible items from the cheapest provider, the dollar store.

Will Harris, who runs White Oak Pastures in Bluffton, Georgia told me "This is a rural phenomenon. And it happened because industrialized agriculture made these places, these economies irrelevant." This process is the economic colonization of rural America.

. . .

We have an alternative. **Regenerative Agriculture**.

Regenerative farmers utilize crop rotation, cover crops, composting, and minimal disturbance of the soil to protect and enrich their soil. They are getting higher crop yields per acre than neighboring farmers and are harvesting crops of superior nutritional quality and better taste. Their crops have higher phytochemical, antioxidant, and micronutrient density compared to harvests of yesteryear.[10] Pesticide and toxin residue free, regenerative agriculture is a higher standard than organic and is three times more profitable than industrial farm production. Eliminating any need for Big Ag's GMO seeds, synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, while sharply reducing irrigation and energy costs makes it much more inexpensive to farm. By far most of the money regenerative farmers spend stays within their local communities. Restoring soil and respecting the land, regenerative healthy vibrant ecosystems are welcoming places for monarch butterflies and a vast diversity of migratory and host insects and wildlife. This is compassionate farming. Regenerative principles are life-values.

The French word, terroir, originally used regarding wine regions, refers to that tapestry encompassing all of the conditions in which any food is grown or produced, that intimate geographically unique interrelationship between soil and climate that gives anything grown there its distinctive nutrient characteristics, and distinctive smell and texture and taste. Regenerative farmers are intimately connected to these essences, the terroir of their land. This is their livelihood, what they dedicate their life's time to, their passion and their pride. Terroir exudes life and alive-ness, and lifestyle. When you buy wine or bread, or a certain vegetable from a region or a specific farm, the discerning can taste qualities unique to it based on its terroir.

In contrast, industrial agriculture is terror on the land. Industrial agriculture

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[10] David R. Montgomery. *Growing A Revolution*. New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. pg. 268

removes what is fundamental about farming from farming — it removes that intimate, sensual, complex interaction between a human being, a farmer, and his or her livelihood and land.

Green Leaf Learning Farm is a regenerative farm.

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What has happened to our blighted urban and suburban communities?

Marlon Foster lives in a suburban community. We walked from Green Leaf over to the house where he grew up. “I can still take you to most of these houses now, not only to visit and sit down but to have something to eat and drink. You could even lay down on the couch. It’s that kind of close-knit community.”

Marlon’s old house appears narrow facing the street, but it goes back a-ways. It has five bedrooms and two bathrooms. “My grandfather, Robert Maddrie, had a high school diploma which was a big thing at the time, and he worked and retired. My grandmother, Doris Maddrie, she left Mississippi because you could only get to eighth grade in Mississippi in her day. They wouldn’t let a black child go higher. She worked at the packing house in Memphis, which was King Cotton. Ours was a three generational family, so you had their wisdom and presence while my parents worked.”

In 1947, when Marlon’s parents moved into this neighborhood it was predominantly white middle class. They were the 1st black family on their block. A second family moved in that same week. Upwardly mobile black families had been moving into this and adjacent neighborhoods in small numbers for decades. Preston Lauterbach in *Memphis Burning* describes “a stable, racially mixed neighborhood in the heart of the South during what were bleak decades for African Americans. And these weren’t Negro servants living in backhouse quarters, but a professional class of homeowners. A child growing up on this street would have absorbed a certain sense of equality. These white families tolerated black neighbors, and these black families kept pace with white elites.”[11]

Marlon remembers that dinner often included aunts, uncles, grandparents, first cousins… “Grandfather would always put on a jacket for Sunday dinner. Grandma Doris was the matriarch. She and my mother were awesome cooks so you can imagine healthy Southern cuisine. We ate good with sweet potatoes, peas, corn, greens, probably about six vegetables at dinner.”

The neighborhood changed rapidly following the federal government’s decision to integrate schools. In the 1960s, working class whites began moving into the

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[11] Preston Lauterbach, *Memphis Burning*, Places Journal, Mar. 2016, https://placesjournal.org/article/memphis-burning/

northeastern suburbs of Shelby County. Today, 80 – 90% of the students in the Memphis city schools are African-American while they number only around 6 - 7% in the suburban Shelby County public school system. “A little while ago we asked our mid-city schools to give up their charter and force Shelby County to be the educator for all students thinking that that would bring us all together,” recounts Marlon. Preston Lauterbach notes what happened next: “In 2011, that sparked a new segregationist revolt. Six suburban municipalities withdrew from the consolidated system and established their own schools, with a huge assist from the Tennessee state legislature, which changed a law that had prohibited new school districts. Now, those suburban districts no longer need to share their resources with the city.”[12]

Marlon understands the essential importance of a good education, that a person’s sense of self-worth and the self-esteem that accompanies that are related to his or her depth of knowledge and understanding. A good education enabled him to become conversant in the business world, to be gainfully and creatively employed, and to discover his livelihood. He was unable to sleep at night witnessing kids trapped, unable to move from doubt or despair to hope — from stagnancy to growth. “If you’re going to build a community, the most essential asset is the human capital, the people, and amongst the people is the children. So often, it’s just a matter of finding a trajectory or an inspiration.” So, he opened the Knowledge Quest Extended Learning Academy (ELA).

Nestled beside the church and across the street from Green Leaf farm is the ELA’s early literacy program for pre-K through 1st graders. Two other ELA centers offer afterschool enrichment for 2nd through 12th graders. The Gaston Community Center, adjacent to a library and an indoor basketball court, is home to the ELA’s theater stage, rehearsal area, art room, and well-maintained classrooms.

All of the enrichment classes are designed to introduce the students to hands-on experience out in the world so they can better understand what a career choice might be like. “Without us, our students might not even get the opportunity to fail. We believe exposure leads to passionate intentional engagement.”

When work opportunities disappear and a neighborhood’s tax base drains, budgets are cut. Inadequately funded schools compromise teacher’s ability to educate their students, to develop the potential for academic competence and excellence in their young minds. Entire student bodies are cast adrift in a poverty of knowledge.

Marlon witnessed his neighborhood descend into disrepair, decay, and blight.

In 2014, Marlon expanded Knowledge Quest into a community and counseling

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[12] Preston Lauterbach, *Memphis Burning*, Places Journal, Mar. 2016, https://placesjournal.org/article/memphis-burning/

center. It has grown to become one of their most significant programs. “This is a ‘physical high need’ community, and we have ‘high need’ individuals. We see our highest commodity as authentic relationships of trust with people we serve and serve alongside and learn from.”

Michelle Miller, the Program Director, told me, “For some of our families, somewhere along the way they’ve lost their hope, or they have never really had anything to hope in or hope for. So, it’s about motivation. How do you light that fire? That they can aspire to more? And it effects their kids. Do you help your children aspire to greatness or to just accept their lot in life? When you get parents to understand this, it’s very rewarding.” Michelle and her team help people discover their path. They build and empower community.

Marlon vividly remembers where this all started for him. “At church they’d call our home ‘hotel happiness’ because of the spirit of hospitality. I’d come home and there would be one of the musicians from the church. ‘Oh, you living with us now?’ ‘Yeah.’ ‘Ok.’ And it was just a thing. People would be having a hard time and need someplace to stay, and my grandmother would have them over.

“People would stay with us a month, three months, six months. They’d come with nothin’ but their clothes and a television, and now they’d have a bed and a room. I’d come home and my bedroom would be occupied by somebody. We’d have to double up, make adjustments in other parts of the house.

“It was all community and love and respect. Loyalty, service, and family hospitality. We’d feed neighbors who were going through a tough time out of our refrigerator.

“When we had enough stuff, we’d always share. And it was anything. My Grandmother Doris had this thing about ‘You better not give away anything that you do not like or isn’t nice.’ You didn’t give away a sock with a hole in it or a raggedy shirt with bleach stains. She used to say about charity that you always give away good stuff, the stuff that if you saw it, you’d want to have.”

Marlon operates the community centers, the farm, and the classrooms in the same manner. “I like having premium experiences in food and technology, and engaging people in one of the most under-resourced communities with that. I like bringing those two extremes together. We are not just a farm, but a USDA certified Organic farm. We grow the healthiest possible food. When you visit our classrooms, you’ll see kids learning in an iMac environment; when you visit our theater and our performance stage, you’ll see it’s the same stage like the premium one over in the Memphis arts district. We will draw top chefs to our bistro and cooking school. The reality is that the people here are exceptional, they are worth the investment.

"What I do a direct confront to is the idea, 'What's good enough for those folks.' You know what my grandmother would say about that. I love the thrill of building something new and creating something from nothing and challenging traditional structures like 'What's good enough for those in poverty?' We don't do poverty programs. The best way to eradicate poverty is to not treat it like poverty. The compassionate aspect of this is, why would I identify a person with the most challenging aspect of their life?

"In South Memphis if you see an African-American child whose family is struggling in a lot of areas, through that lens it can elicit a certain response — but what if I can get you to see *your* kid in that kid? That's a whole different response when that's my child in that child."

. . .

Thomas Jefferson envisioned a democracy of small landowners, of farming families. Whether you are a landowner or not, a homeowner or not, we are each members of and *stakeholders in* the stewardship of our neighborhoods. Compassion for community is about honoring and pursuing livelihoods while fostering a balanced, just, and vibrant economy of our shires.

John Thackara has journeyed into emerging bioregions the world over. In his book *How to Thrive in the Next Economy* he writes, "The respectful interdependence of people and living systems is coming back to life… A bioregion makes sense at many levels: practical, cultural, and ecological. By putting the health of the land and the people who live on it, at the center of the story, a bioregion frames the next economy, not the dying one we have now. Because its core value is stewardship, not perpetual growth, a bioregion turns the global system on its head. Rather than drive the land endlessly to yield more food or fiber per acre, production is determined by the health and carrying capacity of the land through time — a factor which is constantly monitored. Decisions are made by people who work the land and know it best… Growth is measured in terms of land, soil, and water getting healthier, and communities more resilient."[13]

As stakeholders, each one of us has an important role protecting and shepherding this evolution.

To invigorate rural communities (and to protect your health as well as each person you prepare food for) purchase only organic and regeneratively farmed produce and products. Demand is already high and as it increases, more and more *new* regenerative farming families will get their start. No matter what zip code you live in, you

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[13] John Thackara, *How to Thrive in the Next Economy*, New York, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015 pg. 31

can source regenerative produce as well as healthy, toxin-free meat and dairy products from humanely raised pastured animals on sites linked to this endnote.[14] Stop being industrial agriculture's or factory farming's customer — and their victim.

Engage your compassionate activism. Vote for candidates at every level of public office who have a track record of supporting environmental issues. Support the Green New Deal and a New Farm Bill to redirect the crop insurance and other subsidies ($26 billion a year) currently propping up industrial agriculture and factory farms over to regenerative farmers. That will lower the cost of safe healthy food for everyone and free industrial ag farmers to transition. For every two new small farms one new small town business will open. This is the path to countless livelihoods being found and fulfilled, to one million new farm and small town jobs — businesses which will allocate the majority of their spending locally. Rural American community economies will rebound at long last.

Regarding urban and suburban communities, there will always be new construction and neighborhood development with private sector enterprises and individuals at the ready to finance profitable projects. Whenever a neighborhood or business district is aging, when businesses and residents are moving away to newer, more vibrant and exciting areas, that is exactly the time residents must insist their local and state elected officials secure funding to invest in neighborhood regeneration: Maintaining or creating beautiful parks and community centers, incentivizing businesses to remain or to relocate there, investing significantly in the public schools so the quality of education remains at the level of or exceeds that of surrounding areas. For parents of families deciding where to relocate, the quality of public school education is among the top factors in making that decision.

. . .

Marlon and I are walking through Green Leaf Learning Farm's orchard. We are walking in-between pomegranate trees, persimmons, figs, muscadines, pawpaw trees, "the only native fruit tree in Tennessee," pear and apple trees, blueberry and blackberry bushes.

For three years after college Marlon was a professional volunteer. He then applied for and got a United Way grant and started Knowledge Quest. Over the next five years he built Knowledge Quest from a single room in public housing to the community center where it is now, married, had three children, and bought and renovated his two-story house, which is beautiful to look at now, but was on the demolition list when he

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[14] https://www.thegreathealing.org/blog/source-humanely-raised-pastured-animals-free-range-chicken-grass-fed-grass-finished-beef-on-these-sites

purchased it. He also entered seminary, graduated with an Ecumenical Master of Divinity Degree, founded a church and began thinking about starting an urban farm.

Our actions, like Marlon's, can collectively have immense impact. We can save mountains. Every dollar, every spending choice you make, your attitude, your voice, your complacency — or lack thereof — it all matters.

Heal yourself eating only safe healthy food. Thrive. Find your balance, your strength, your truth. Enlist your voice, and your resolve. Doing everything we can to reinvigorate communities across this land is a moral imperative. The Golden Rule is part of our journey. You know the one — "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." More than how we treat others, it applies to how we treat our world: Healthy thriving people, living in and stewards of healthy regenerating communities, all part of a healthy robust nation.

Memphis is like Marlon. The community of South Memphis will turn a new leaf. More and more people are realizing opportunity there. You can buy land for next to nothing. In the coming years, as more and more people are drawn into the neighborhood and rediscover it thanks in part perhaps to Marlon's farm, educational programs and community center, they may discover the opportunity there. Young people living in Midtown or Cooper-Young, where rents are high and the dream of buying property deferred, perhaps they'll look south. This was once a prosperous neighborhood where black families lived side by side with white families as early as 1900 and for the following 60 years. As more and more residents of this community are empowered and leading healthier lives, hope blooms like the sunflowers on Marlon's farm.

It's about livelihood. And community.

Martin Luther King, Jr., had a dream. And his dream did not end in Memphis. Marlon Foster has one, too.

And they're not the only ones.

Wendell Berry, *The Art of Loading Brush*, Berkeley, California: Counterpoint, 2017 pgs. 78-79

[2] Wendell Berry, *Renewing Husbandry,* Orion Magazine, June, 2018, https://orionmagazine.org/article/renewing-husbandry/

[3] The State of Obesity. *Food Insecure Children*, https://stateofobesity.org/food-insecurity/

[4] Joel Fuhrman, M.D., *Fast Food Genocide*, New York, New York: Harper Collins, 2017 pgs. 154-6.

[5] Feeding America, *Millions of Rural Children Struggle with Hunger*, FeedingAmerica.org, https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/rural-hunger-facts

[6] Janet Adamy and Paul Overberg, *Rural America is the New 'Inner City'*, The Wall Street Journal, May 26, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/rural-america-is-the-new-inner-city-1495817008

[7] John Ikerd, *The Economic Colonization of Rural America*, Daily Yonder, Feb. 28, 2018, https://www.dailyyonder.com/economic-colonization-rural-america/2018/02/28/24068/

[8] Wendell Berry, *Renewing Husbandry,* Orion Magazine, June, 2018, https://orionmagazine.org/article/renewing-husbandry/

[9] David R. Montgomery. *Growing A Revolution*. New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. pg. 268

[10] Preston Lauterbach, *Memphis Burning*, Places Journal, Mar. 2016, https://placesjournal.org/article/memphis-burning/

[11] Preston Lauterbach, *Memphis Burning*, Places Journal, Mar. 2016, https://placesjournal.org/article/memphis-burning/

[12] John Thackara, *How to Thrive in the Next Economy*, New York, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015 pg. 31

[13] https://www.thegreathealing.org/blog/source-humanely-raised-pastured-animals-free-range-chicken-grass-fed-grass-finished-beef-on-these-sites

“CRUSHING REALITY,” Mixed media on paper by

Jerry Gates

SHORT STORIES

FIRST PLACE, RICK DEMARINIS SHORT STORY PRIZE

Linda Zamora Lucero

SPEAK TO ME OF LOVE
Linda Zamora Lucero

The famous cherry trees were in glorious bloom all across the City of Light. Dina, thirty-eight, was in Paris – her first time – with her partner Marc, and this morning her agent had texted the astonishing news that she'd been cast as the lead in a play by the hotter-than-hot Lupe Castellanos. Rehearsals would start the week after she returned to San Francisco. Strolling with Marc toward the Louvre in her turquoise halter jumpsuit and silver sandals, Dina was practically floating with joy. "Let's celebrate at La Moulin Rouge tonight!" she said, "I'm dying to see a real cabaret."

"La Moulin Rouge?" Marc said, squeezing her hand. "That's for tourists, sweetie." This assessment, while not unexpected, made Dina's blood rise, for nothing is worse than reason in the face of unaccountable desire. "Besides, I was looking forward to trying the lobster *navarin* tonight." Nearing the Louvre, they joined a crowd at the

crosswalk. Dina turned to Marc in his UCLA t-shirt and cargo shorts that screamed American Tourist. Chalk it up to love that she hadn't let this bother her until now.

"The same restaurant?" she said.

"I thought you liked it." Marc sounded hurt.

Dina braced herself for an argument. *You realize, Marc, we* are *tourists? And I truly want to see a French cabaret. In France.* But before she opened her mouth, her gaze was drawn by a tall, broad-shouldered figure emerging from a taxi pulled up at the curb. His face was hidden under a gray Borsalino, yet something about the showy manner in which the man said, "Ça va!" while thrusting a fistful of euros through the window made her stomach lurch.

Dina removed her sunglasses, her skin prickling with alarm, "Pablo?"

Turning, the man widened his eyes with apparent disbelief. "Dina?" He began howling. The signal turned green, people surged forth like spawning salmon.

"*Qué haces en Paris*?" Pablo wiped his eyes with a handkerchief. Despite the balmy weather, he was wearing a gray suit and tie, his polished shoes reflecting sunlight.

A sinking feeling overcame Dina. After breaking up with Pablo eighteen months ago, she had made a concerted effort to prevent sadness from taking up residence in her heart. With the help of a hypnotist, she had swapped her Marlboros for Pilates, and had her unruly Chicana tresses cut and styled into a bob with bangs. With sunglasses and AOC lipstick she liked to think that she resembled a brown Liza Minnelli, in Liza's Broadway-era, pre-Hollywood, pre-rehab days. She had avoided gatherings where she might run into Pablo.

Smiling, Pablo extended his hand to Marc. "*Soy* Pablo."

"Marc," Marc said, who looked like a college kid beside Pablo, although at forty-three, he was only a couple of years younger.

"*Aquí* – Paris – of all places," Pablo said. "This calls for a drink!"

Dina stared at Pablo, stunned into silence. The signal turned red. Traffic whizzed by.

"It *is* a coincidence," Marc said, brushing a shock of brown hair from his hazel eyes. He smiled, "How about a drink, hon?"

Was Marc succumbing to Pablo's uncanny charm? Was he curious about her ex-partner? Or was he just annoying today? She decided on annoying.

"Dina?" Marc said.

Curious herself about why Pablo was in Paris, against her better judgment she said, “All right, but just one – we’re going to the Louvre.”

They found a sidewalk table at a bistro, Pablo sitting opposite Dina and Marc. After the waiter took the order, Dina said to Pablo, “So. You’re in Paris.” She didn’t trust him for a second When they broke up, Pablo had called, texted and emailed her constantly. He’d collared their friends, vowed that he’d win her back – he’d find a regular job, quit drinking and – whatever it took, *sinceramente*. After zero response from Dina, Pablo finally told her best friend Susie that he got it. “No one will ever love Dina like I do, but I accept it is over *y para siempre* . . . I wish her only good.” The texts and voicemails ceased, leaving an echoing emptiness. For weeks afterward Dina burst into tears at unexpected times, despite the fact that this was what she had wanted – unshackled from Pablo, she was free to make a new life.

So how was it that Pablo was sitting across from her in a Paris café, taking a drag off his cigarette, releasing a lovely curl of diaphanous vapor laden with carcinogens?

“I won *una rifa, mujer!*” Pablo’s brown eyes bounced from Dina to Marc and back. “It was Paris or $10,000 U.S.! I picked Paris, *claro*. Ten days, all expenses paid! Air Francia, Hotel Georges V! *Primera clase*, all the way.”

Dina raised a dubious eyebrow, although with Pablo anything was possible. She reached for Pablo’s Gitanes, avoiding Marc’s surprised look.

Pablo lit Dina’s cigarette with a match and shook it out, “Everybody is awesome. Whoever says the French are assholes are the real assholes. The concierge, the sommelier, *los cocineros – ¡son simpáticos, todos!*”

Pablo wore his Borsalino with flair and his shoes shined *a toda madre,* but he likely had holes in his *chonies*. In their three years together, she could count the times Pablo had had the wherewithal to gas up his battered Toyota. Not that Pablo wouldn’t be right at home in a five-star hotel. When he had money, he spent it as if he were King Midas, and when he didn’t – he was still fucking Midas, *¡cabrones!* He once gifted her long-stemmed strawberries in January which she couldn’t eat because she had guessed their cost. He accused her of attaching a price tag to everything, and maybe he’d been right. She’d grown up in a working-class family that appreciated the value of a dollar, but Pablo, raised in a Panamanian shantytown, had stolen food to survive. Strawberries in winter proved he was Somebody.

Dina’s eyes watered and her tongue tasted like burnt peanuts. She stubbed out the cigarette.

“Not a vacation *per se*,” Marc was saying, “I have work meetings, but it’s flexible so I have free time with Dina.”

“The timing worked,” Dina added. “I just finished ‘Tita’ at OSF.”

“The critics called you brilliant,” Pablo said, radiating enthusiasm.

“Decent reviews,” she said evenly. *Had* he followed her to Paris? It was preposterous, even for Pablo.

“She was superb,” Marc said, caressing her hand.

Dina slowly withdrew her hand, wary of the jealousy Pablo was capable of, but the men seemed comfortable chatting about food, weather, the exchange rate. She relaxed and admired the towers of Notre Dame. Despite their earlier disagreement, life with Marc was smooth sailing. No running out of gas on the freeway, no women texting him after midnight.

“I picked Paris to visit the Magic Museum, but I think it has disappeared on me,” Pablo laughed and threw his hands in the air. “Poof!”

“Still obsessed with Robert-Houdin?” Dina asked. They had once shared a mutual love of magic.

“A genius!” Pablo said.

“You mean Harry Houdini, the escape artist,” Marc corrected.

Pablo shook his head. “Not quite.” He leaned forward, addressing Marc. “Houdini, *the American*, stole the Frenchman Robert-Houdin’s name – *homage* the magicians call it. I call it robbery. The Magic Museum has many artifacts, but when I went to the address all I found was a café making Greek gyros. Not French, but with a beer? *Delicioso*.”

“Dina wants to go to La Moulin Rouge,” Marc said, apropos of nothing. “But I can’t see wasting one of our last nights in Paris at a tourist trap.”

Dina resisted saying, *You prefer to eat at the overpriced, clichéd Le Cochon.*

“I can get you complimentary tickets from the concierge at my hotel,” Pablo offered.

“Seriously?” Dina blurted out without thinking.

Just as Marc started to say something, Pablo signaled the waiter for oysters. “*Sé que no puedes beber con el estómago vacío*.” This last to Dina.

Dina’s felt her cheeks redden with anger. “Actually,” she said evenly, “We don’t have any free nights left, but thanks for the offer.”

Marc said, “Tell me more about Houdini.”

"We should get going." Dina nudged Marc, but he was oblivious.

"Robert-Houdin," Pablo said, pronouncing it *Rooberr-Whodan*, "Was born in Blois in 1805 into a family of clockmakers . . ."

Having heard the story countless times, Dina pondered how exactly coincidence worked.

Back at the hotel that afternoon, Dina downed a couple of Advils and fell into bed next to Marc, shutting her eyes in a futile effort to keep the room from spinning.

"I wanted to see the Mona Lisa," she moaned.

"Pablo's alright, despite what your friends say," Marc said. "I figured he was going to knife me or something."

"Probably couldn't get the switchblade past TSA." She tried focusing on the florid pink wallpaper then closed her eyes. "No, you were being just a little superior. Why did you insist on picking up the check?"

"Didn't you say he was always broke? I didn't want to embarrass him."

"He invited us, Marc," Dina sighed.

Marc turned on his side to face her, his voice gentle. "What's bothering you? And why are you smoking again?"

What *was* bothering her? Pablo's unexpected appearance? The foolishness of two bottles of wine before lunch? How Marc and Pablo had bro-bonded? All of it, she decided. Pablo had charisma, there was no denying. They'd met at a party almost five years ago where he'd handed her a flyer for a fundraiser he was producing for a Mission gallery. "*Flaco Jimenez– un maestro,*" he said, launching into the history of how the accordion made its way to Texas. She found his passion irresistible. Plus his black curly hair. The mole at the side of his mouth like the dot of an exclamation point. Later, the tangerine taste of his dark skin.

Pablo had always worked hard. He did whatever it took to get musicians on stage and people in seats or dancing on the dance floor; had, in fact, produced incredible events. A few nearly broke even. Soon they argued about his unwillingness to get a regular job, her refusal to support his work, his lack of common sense, her sharp tongue.

One day, through some random connection – Pablo agreed to bring an acclaimed Argentine tango ensemble to San Francisco for a two-weekend run. It was an ambitious undertaking – and his budget projections proved renting a larger venue would bring larger rewards.

"Maybe they're the rage in Buenos Aires, but I've never heard of them!" Dina said.

"You have to believe, *mujer*," he said. All that was needed was Dina's credit card to secure the venue. She knew she should have refused.

Exactly one-hundred-ninety-three people came to opening night in a 1,676-seat theater, nearly every person comped and huddled together in the sixth and seventh rows orchestra as if on a melting ice floe, Dina with a hard knot in her stomach that eased after the first few notes because it was the most thrilling music she had ever heard. The last piece, "Adiós Nonino," a tender tribute to Piazzolla's father, left her sobbing, devastated both by its poignancy and the knowledge that she and Pablo were done.

The next day, music critic Alister Balboni called the production "one of the top-ten musical events in decades – shoot yourself if you miss it." Even so, five sold-out houses could not avert a financial disaster. It wasn't the artist fees, venue, airfare, taxis, instruments, sound, lighting, publicist, advertising, printing, security, or even the eleven hotel rooms and per diems for exactly fifteen days – these were budgeted. Per usual, it was the other costs that broke them: Pablo, *el gran mero-mero* producer, hosting the musicians at restaurants after the shows, the party swelling with local hangers-on lured by free food and *vino*. It was the roses for the musicians on opening and closing nights, the chocolates. When Dina questioned expenses, Pablo countered, "Imagine what it takes to make music like that!"

When Dina demanded that Pablo move out, he apologized for having carried on with another actress, under the impression that Dina had discovered the affair, was breaking up with him because of it, would admire his honesty, and forgive him.

It took major effort not to smack his face. "Get out," she said bitterly.

Her best friend dragged Dina to salsa dancing classes – because six months had passed and she needed to get out – where she met Marc with his lopsided grin and eccentric sense of rhythm. Marc read books instead of gleaning factoids from Twitter. On weekends, he hiked outdoors instead of watching fútbol on TV. Marc was a tech engineer, drove a Prius of recent vintage, owned a condo with a view. He'd once been married but without progeny, which made Dina selfishly sad. She ached for small humans with dirty faces in her life. Marc was cuter and younger than Pablo. She liked that. Marc was an exceptional lover. She especially liked that.

Marc called Dina "my free-spirited Latina. Or is it Latinx?" He was determined to get things right.

"Free-spirited?" she said. "I worry the sun won't come up in the morning!"

"Now you have me to take care of you," he said.

Dina was offended. "I'm a member of Actor's Equity. I have health insurance and I pay my rent on time."

"I just mean I'll always have your back," Marc said, embracing her.

God, what *was* her problem? Marc was just what she needed: down-to-earth, debt-free, *and* girlfriend-approved. Marc was the antidote to Pablo, who fogged up her mind by his mere presence.

The next morning, Dina made sure she and Marc were among the first into the Salle des Etats where above the bobbing heads, she managed to glimpse the Mona Lisa.

"Done!" Marc said, grinning. "Now let's go find the café."

Dina laughed, but recalled her father's advice to look for the truth in every joke.

Afterwards, they exited to the Cour Napoléon, where the overcast sky was sweet with the promise of rain. Marc was in Warriors regalia, Dina in a green-gold raincoat, a blue scarf and brown boots. She was in great spirits until she spotted Pablo near the Pei pyramid, leaning on a furled red umbrella, searching the throngs as if waiting for someone.

"Is that Pablo?" Marc asked.

"He's ridiculous!" Dina said abruptly, striding towards Pablo.

"Slow down," Marc said, scurrying after her.

"*Bonjour*!" Pablo shouted, making his way towards them. "I figured I would find you here. I have the tickets!"

They must have looked perplexed, because he added "La Moulin Rouge! For tonight! The concierge found us *excelente* seats!"

La Moulin Rouge was bursting with tourists, and *formidable* was the only word for it. Leggy showgirls, with gorgeous smiles and bare breasts, strutted in towering heels and g-strings, flaunting feathered headdresses and costumes stitched with a dizzying array of rhinestones, bangles and sequins. A beret-wearing woman sang "Parlez-moi d'amour," in a voice tinged with nostalgie. Dina sighed, imagining Montparnasse in the 40s, filled with artists and creativity. She adored every over-the-top routine, every hilarious pratfall, the tuxedoed orchestra and glittery sets. At the grand finale, dozens of high kicking can-can dancers in billowy skirts, turned and flung their rumps into the air and shrieked. Dina was the first on her feet for the standing ovation.

"Thank you!" Dina said to Pablo as they said goodnight in the crowded street outside the theater. She rubbed her cheeks. "My face still aches from happiness."

"Let's all get together back home," Pablo said, kissing Dina on both cheeks and shaking Marc's hand. "*Vamos a un restaurante francés*."

In your dreams, Dina thought.

"Have a good trip," Marc said.

When the phone rang the next morning, Dina supposed it was the front desk calling about the water because it was out, but it was Pablo.

"What?" Dina demanded.

"*Estoy llamando a Marco*," he said, defensively. "I want to run a business idea by him."

"He just left for a meeting. I'll tell him you called."

"*Pues*, have a *cafecito* with me, *ma cherie*," Pablo said in a faux French accent.

"Pablo."

"Marco is a good man. I'm happy for you."

"You sound sincere," Dina said, half accusingly. She glanced at her watch. "I do need coffee."

Knowing that Pablo liked her to dress up, she showed up at Le Petit Pont sans makeup in sneakers, faded jeans, a yellow tank top. Pablo wore the Borsalino, a linen suit and a shoulder bag. They chatted about global warming, the upcoming U.S. elections, her friend Susie's new beau.

"*Qué es "un beau*"?"

"Could be anything." Dina peeled the layers of her croissant and chewed them slowly, considering the converging paths that had led them here. It was gratifying, knowing they were forging a friendship of sorts. After coffee, they wandered the alleys of the Latin Quarter aimlessly window shopping, when Pablo noticed the small ornate sign of gold and crimson announcing La Musée de la Magie.

"*¿Ves?* As soon as I give up, it throws itself in my path," Pablo said.

"*C'est la vie*," Dina agreed. "Look, there's a magic show at 1pm."

Pablo purchased entries at the box office, and they descended the rickety staircase. The rooms were crowded with students, the exhibits filled with memorabilia of magic and prestidigitation from the time of the Egyptians to the present – Robert-Houdin, Houdini and dozens of magicians, illusionists, conjurers and palmists Dina had

never heard of, invariably designated as "*Le Incroyable*" or "*Le Formidable*" or "*Le Etonnant*." Pablo knew them all.

At 12:45, a bell chimed and they made their way to an intimate horseshoe-shaped theater.

"Full house," she said, but Pablo, reading the program, didn't hear her over the chattering students.

When the lights went down, Marceau le Magnifique, a mustachioed fop in top hat and tuxedo, appeared in a follow-spot. He put a finger to his lips until the audience went silent. Dina could hear herself breathing. Marceau le Magnifique pulled up his cuffs to reveal pale wrists, flashed his hands to the audience – *absolument vides!* – and proceeded to extract a gold coin from behind the ear of a girl with pigtails in the front row, lifting the shiny disc for all to see.

"Oooooh," the girl cried out. The audience roared, and Dina was transported back to a theater presentation in third grade, where a donkey-eared creature and a beautiful fairy sprinkled her with silvery stardust. Dina had just about peed in her chair. It had been dollar store glitter, she had figured out years afterwards, the donkey and the fairy, costumed actors in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the forest, painted cardboard.

Dina had become an actress in order to return to that forest, but she was wiser now. She knew about pulleys and trap doors, smoke and mirrors, knew Marceau Le Magnifique was nothing more nor less than an ordinary man who likely adored his children, cheated on his partner, told fart jokes.

A live canary was chirping on Marceau's forefinger, and with the wave of his wand the bird was encased in a floating glass bulb. Dina's heart caught in her throat. The bulb hovered and rose higher, making a series of loops above the dumbfounded audience, the bird's chirping muted inside the glass, yellow feathers unruffled. No strings. She could barely draw breath. *How?* she thought. And next, *Don't tell me, please let it stay magic*.

"I want to bring him to San Pancho," Pablo whispered, ruining the moment. His words made her nauseous, invoking memories of irate managers, bill collectors, sleepless nights.

With what money? she almost said, but the canary in glass had vanished in a corkscrew of red smoke, and Marceau Le Magnifique was taking bows.

"¡Ese pajarito!" Pablo said, shaking his head in awe. "Where did it go?"

They surfaced into the bright day. She checked her cell, it was still early. She was famished. They bought a baguette from a boulangerie, avocados, olives, pâté and a bottle of champagne from La Negresse delicatessen. Pablo wouldn't let her pay for any

of it, and there was wonder in that! At Luxembourg Gardens they rented chairs and toasted with crystal flutes Pablo had borrowed from the hotel and had been carrying in his bag, wrapped in napkins. This *was* suspect, she knew, and *muy Pablo*, but the sun was out, her stomach was growling, and a feast beckoned. She kicked off her Nikes. The smell of cut grass tickled her nose as she ate. Watching a little girl lob bread to the fish in the fountain, a familiar longing stabbed at Dina's heart. No sadness, she commanded, taking deep breaths, no regrets. It worked. In the blue sky was a cow, a Buddha, a saxophone, all dissolving. She stole a sidelong glance at Pablo, leaning back in his chair, hat in his lap, arms cradling his head, staring unblinking into the universe.

The champagne in Dina's glass fizzed and burst like fireworks until the clanging of a church bell broke the languid afternoon.

Pablo poured the last of the champagne. "Crazy. I didn't even know Paris existed when I was a kid. I couldn't have imagined it." He smiled. "*Y aquí soy*, Dina. *Suerte*."

"*Suerte*," Dina said, raising her glass. "I should go. We have dinner reservations at Le Cochin."

Pablo chuckled. *"Te acompañaré al hotel."* They ambled the Quai de Conti, turning right at the pedestrian-only Pont des Arts, silver ribbons visible between wooden planks. They stopped mid-point on the bridge and Dina took photos of life on the water. Green crested ducks, a swan, a bevy of British schoolgirls in a Bateau Ivre singing, "Row, row, row, your boat . . ." countered by, "Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily."

The most delightfully existential lyrics ever, Dina thought. She waved but the girls were too caught up in harmonizing to notice a woman old enough to be their mother. As she turned back, Pablo took her in his arms, and without thinking she melted into him, her body filling with champagne effervescence, her head as light as a balloon, her heart quickening against his chest, the familiar warmth of his tongue, the tangerine scent of his skin.

The strident engine of a passing motorboat broke the spell. Returning to her senses, Dina reared back and pushed Pablo away.

"Why did you follow me here?" she demanded.

"Dina, *no* . . ."

"*¡Mentiras!*" Her lips felt ripe and swollen, badly used. "This isn't fun anymore," she said.

Pablo took her hands and kissed her fingertips. "*Cierre los ojos.*" Something inside Dina began to stir despite her effort to shut it down. It was about the stuff of

romantic novels, passionate poetry and over-the-top musicals, not meant for real life. A vision of dear, adorable Marc on his way to the hotel to meet her flashed in her head.

"Cut it out!" Dina pulled her hands from his, hot tears stinging her eyes. She fled across the bridge to where an arcade of cherry trees waited, showering pink confetti in the breeze. The afternoon sunlight made everything golden and perfectly enchanting, like a stage set. Dina turned to see Pablo on the bridge looking at her, the Borsalino in hand lending him a rakish, poetic look. A charged energy emanated from him as if he were an actor waiting for the next line - her next line. Her body tingled with desire and panic. A tiny part of her wanted to run back to him. The tiny part of her that was still foolish. The cell phone in her hand buzzed. Marc's name flashed on the screen. Life, like theater, one crisis after another. Tiny yellow birds darted overhead like gilded fairies luring her back onto the stage. The hazy light blinded her.

SECOND PLACE, RICK DEMARINIS SHORT STORY PRIZE

WE THREW THEM AWAY

Ruby Hansen Murray

At noon on Saturday Joe drove out to the cultural center with his cousin Terry slouched in the seat beside him. He parked between an SUV and a pickup with Osage tags in the nearly empty lot. The American, Osage Nation and MIA flags hung limp on a metal pole. Joe was going to name a family of California Osages. A woman named Dahlia McIntyre looking for someone to name her granddaughter had called the congressional chambers when he was the only one in the office. Usually people were named by someone in their family, but not always.

"You're not our clan," he'd said, over and over, but she wore him down. She begged, and then, like a true Osage grandmother, bullied him into it. He had been able to reconcile the naming when he remembered he'd been elected to congress only twenty votes ahead of Douglas Whiteshirt. He needed off reservation Osages' votes, and he hoped these people had a lot of relatives.

"Who'd you say they were?" Terry said.

"They're related to the McIntyres in Hominy," he said.

Terry nodded slightly. "It's supposed to be at breakfast," he said.

"I told her," Joe said, his hand still on the wheel.

As Joe walked to the building, he felt the heat holding him up. It was 107 degrees, but it felt like 120. He was almost dizzy.

"Remember when we were kids, and we didn't have air conditioning? "Terry said. "We were all used to the heat. We'd go out to Grandma and Grandpa Joe's at the lake."

"You and me and Timmy War Chief," Joe said. Tim's hair was streaked with white now. He had a rolling gait, like his hip was going bad, noticeable as he made his way up to a podium to speak or pray, which he did often these days, as he always had something to say.

They entered a vestibule filled with cool air. The space beyond was mostly empty —bright with fluorescent light on linoleum, an industrial kitchen on one wall.

A white-haired woman came forward with her hand extended. "I'm Dahlia McIntyre," she said. Her accent gave her away as one of those Osages who had grownup in Oklahoma before they left the area.

“Thank you for coming,” she said. “We’re so excited for today.” Joe took a breath and pulled in his stomach. A family of white-looking women of varying ages and a ten-year old girl sat quietly around two banquet tables lined with blue tablecloths.

Dahlia shook Terry’s hand too. A round-edged woman, she wore a lilac top and pants. Joe felt queasy; he’d been out at the casino with his cousins the night before. He stood up taller, trying to think of what to say. Terry talked with the grandmother a little, before he took the car and drove west to visit his girl friend.

Angela Garfield from Meat-Pie Heaven stood behind a counter lined with serving trays. Tribal council photos lined the walls. Joe’s great-great-grandfather stood with the elders against a bare hillside in Kansas. Those old guys were stronger and more fit than anyone alive now. Even the big square men like Wahtiankah could run all day. The glossy black and white photos from the Fifties looked like corporate board meetings. In the color photo of the most recent Congress, the two lawyers wore striped blankets. Joe looked dignified, he thought, in a red and blue Native American Church blanket and a turquoise bolo tie.

Dahlia said, “You come and get you a plate.”

“I’m not really hungry,” he said, as she walked him toward the counter. He pressed his hand along his right side. He heard his grandmother admonishing him to never, ever refuse food when someone offered.

“Doin’ all right?” he asked Angela, who leaned on the counter, her pinky-red lipstick still bright.

“Want a meat pie?” she said. An aluminum tray held foiled wrapped meat pies tucked in like babies beside the condiments for Indian tacos.

“You know I do,” he said. She used beef suet to make the old recipes, widow makers. “Some chili too, but I’ll pass on the fry bread,” he said. His gut rumbled before he’d touched the food.

Angela made good chili, too, like his grandmother. She asked how his wife was, and he asked if Braxton would be home from the oil field for the dances.

“So, glad you could come today, Joe,” Dahlia McIntyre said, when he sat down. Another white-haired woman smiled at him in between bites. Dahlia introduced her family: Sarah, Dolores, Cathy and the little girl, Emmeline. The names and faces ran together.

“Have you all been to the Ranch Wife’s restaurant yet?” Joe asked. He felt certain they’d stood on the sidewalk in the heat for hours with the rest of the church groups driving in to celebrate someone’s birthday. A woman with a long white braid began to describe how nice the revitalization was for Pawhuska, how the tribe should open a visitor’s center and a hotel of their own.

“Excuse me,” he said, putting down his fork and pushing himself up from the metal folding chair. He walked with all the dignity he could manage as he hurried to the ô.

Angela stopped loading her meat pies as he passed. “I’ll be heading be out, unless you’d like me to stay,” she said. He waved bye and found himself blinking, as if his glasses were the wrong prescription. He felt off balance, almost woozy, as he started to push open the door to the Men’s. He was inside the first stall, his belt undone before he realized he was feeling an earthquake. He half-fell onto the stool, banging against the harvest gold metal wall as it moved one way and then the other. The earthquakes in Pawhuska weren’t as strong as those in Pawnee or Cushing, where the library’s heavy metal doors held a sign warning of Earthquake Damage, but they were becoming more frequent.

Joe’s bowels rioted. He finished, flushed and then turned the door’s metal lever, but its flat contour didn’t yield to his big fingers. He fiddled with it, trying to scrape it with the edge of his thumb, but it didn’t open. The earthquake had shimmed the stalls together at a slant. He was a strong man. He worked out regularly with a set of weights in the garage—well, maybe once every other week or so—but the door didn’t give as he worked on it.

He needed Terry and his pocketknife. He pictured his cell phone in the leather pouch at his place on the table. He had no intention of flattening himself and crawling under the door. He was too tall, and he wouldn’t fit, in any case.

He prayed, Holy Father, you gave Sampson strength to pull down the pillars in the temple, open these doors for me, in Jesus’ name. He stood and pushed again, but the stall was really sideways.

Then, he prayed Indatse Wakanda, Wakanda Ishinke, please help me. The doors stayed stuck. He sat on the toilet with his pants on, resting his head in his hands, thighs aching on the curved seat. He pictured the women sitting around the table looking at each other, discussing what kind of bowel malady he suffered, or worse, what kind of bozo gets himself stuck in the bathroom, not someone you trust with the Nation’s business.

As a Marine, Joe had been part of a security detail for Navy carriers. He remembered being on duty on a Saturday morning, when someone didn’t show up for his watch. The sailors all reported to their abandon ship stations and accounted for all the divisions, while the master-at-arms scoured the ship. They found the guy in the aft head with his pants around his ankles, his faced flattened against the side of the stall, his snores filling the space. Joe flushed the toilet again and again, hoping the stink would dissipate.

Someone knocked and a middle-aged woman called, “Excuse me. Are you okay?”

He called out that the stall door was stuck. Shouting over the roar of the fan, he asked her to call Scott Moore.

She was back shortly to tell him that Scott was in Oklahoma City at Red Earth, but he’d send someone. Joe knew a lot of people were dancing at the festival. He put his head down again. Trapped. The women in his own family would just laugh, but he wasn’t sure about these people. The door to the Men’s Room opened. A youngish female voice asked, “Can I help?”

“It’s the latch,” he said. “That quake rattled the stall.” Together they pushed on the walls. She pulled the panels straighter, while he worked the latch. At last, the door opened to reveal a plain-faced woman in her forties with a wedge of red hair. She grinned.

“You’re free!” She seemed as excited as if he’d been rescued from a mine.

When he came out they all cheered. He straightened and felt his chest puff out. He was so happy he bowed. They clapped more loudly.

The red-haired rescuer, Dolores, turned out to live in Kansas City. “Well, Ladies, let’s go ahead,” he said. “I understand you all need to get back to Bartlesville this evening.” For a moment, looking at the women he thought maybe God wanted him to bring them in. Even these long distance people had Osage roots. He thought about the sermon at Osage Indian Baptist, how Jesus offers a way to those who turn to him. Maybe if these people tried they could become Osage again, even the ones who lived far away and never came home. He wasn’t positive, but he felt they might make an effort to humble themselves and listen. In this spirit, he said, “Hawey” and wiped a hand over his hair, before he remembered he didn’t want to do that anymore. Lately, when he looked in the mirror during the day, his hair stood at odd angles. He realized the leather pouch was in the car, gone with Terry to his girlfriend’s house. He knew the traditional names he’d give them for first, second and third daughters of course, but he didn’t know how they were related.

The grandmother stared at Joe intently. She wanted him to hurry, he could tell. Behind her, a larger than life portrait of Claremore by George Caitlin loomed. Joe was ready to ask Dahlia to remind him of the women’s names, when Terry returned, walking through the band of light falling across the floor. He slid into the group like he hadn’t been gone and asked Dahlia which family they were from.

“My father was Henry McIntyre from Wynona. His father came from Alsace-Lorraine and got a farm in Kansas around 1870. He married a DuBois and lived on it till he died.”

Trying to head Terry off, Joe said, “You want to get me the leather pouch from the car?”

Terry turned to Dahlia and said, “The Osage had to leave Kansas in 1870. You might be able to find out whose land you got, when we had to leave.”

While Terry walked toward the car, Joe took his eagle wing fan from the cedar case.

“The white people moved in after the Osages were gone,” the granddaughter said.

“Yeah,” Joe said. “Indians had to leave all kinds of land. Did you study that in school?”

“My grandmother told me,” she said. Joe looked at Dahlia.

“She was right,” he said. “You can go up on the Mullendore’s ranch and see where some of us crossed out of Kansas when we came. Osages go up there and walk that land about once a year.”

When Terry returned, Joe looked over the list. “We should get started.” He prayed in Osage for a while. He watched red-headed Dolores’ chin tremble as she tried not to weep. That’s what happened when the mixed bloods showed up. It was still in them, he figured, who they might have been, if their parents had stayed with the tribe. The love for the language showed it.

Joe finished praying in Osage, and then he said, “I asked Heavenly Father to help these people, teach them what they need to know. Take pity on them, Father, they don’t know what they’re doing.”

He started with the eldest, the granddaughter of the pioneer who came to live in Kansas from the part of France the Germans had taken over in the Franco-Prussian war. He named her daughter, another first daughter, who was born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and then he named another first daughter born in Evanston, Illinois on down to the youngest. As he named each one, he fanned them off. The one with the short red-hair smiled when the wind from the eagle wing touched her face, as if she felt the grace falling on her. When he gave them their names, he prayed for them in English. “Father, you help them know our ways.”

Dahlia thanked Joe, and she placed a Chief Joseph Pendleton blanket on his shoulders. They sat around the table for a few minutes. As soon as it seemed right, Joe and Terry shook hands all around again before they left.

In the car, Joe turned up the air conditioning, while Terry fumbled with the seat belt. Joe remembered his own naming at the spring church meeting in the family round house. The celebration at the noon meal, the long tables and the coolness of spring. He wondered where the men from the McIntyre family were, whether the women had husbands, boyfriends, or brothers.

“Mary Beth wanted to know when you started naming people,” Terry said.

Joe stopped himself from reminding Terry how often he’d helped his Uncle. He remembered how Donny named those who lived off the reservation. He’d say, “These people have come a long way,” trying to shame his grandkids into remembering their responsibilities. He was nearly eighty toward the end, and Joe would tell him how busy life had gotten. “No excuse,” he’d say, “only two places you gotta be, War Mothers in May and I'n lon schka in June. That’s not asking much.”

Terry choked back a laugh. “Mary Beth says you should keep a list of these people, because they’re going to call and ask you to spell their Indian name and you need to remember.”

“JOSEPH’S COAT,” Quilt by Jacqueline Johnson

SHORT STORIES

SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

Elizabeth Brown

When I think of Eileen, I remember pressing the button on the cassette recorder, red light on to show it was recording. We sat side-by-side on plastic lounge chairs in my parents' backyard, our social studies book, *The World Around Us,* on my lap. Warm wind rustled the pines. Pollen drifted through the air. Neighbors' sprinklers hissed in the distance.

"Do you want 'Urban Dwellers' or Rural Communities'?" I asked.

"Do rural first."

We'd save life in the cities for last. Boston was more than thirty miles away. Eileen had spent last summer there, at the Perkins School for the Blind, learning braille and how to navigate the subway and bus systems. Although she was blind, she was quick to emphasize that she was only "legally" blind: she could see shapes and shadows, and sometimes, if she held a piece of paper very close to her blue eyes, and if the left iris stopped wandering long enough, she could make out words.

"I'm not really blind," she would say, in a way that made me wonder, in a way that felt profound.

As we finished ninth grade, Eileen was so proficient in braille as to almost not need my help anymore. She'd gotten me the job of reading textbooks to her, so that she, a disabled person, could keep up in public school. I had this job since the beginning of junior high. It provided a regular government-issued check, and I used this money to buy clothes, makeup, *Seventeen Magazine* and bottles of Sun-In which I sprayed copiously upon my curly brown hair, hoping to turn it blonde and sleek like Eileen's. We spent hours in our bikinis sitting in my back yard, surrounded by the lemony chemical smell of Sun-In, so that, as we closed our eyes to listen to Janis Ian ("ugly duckling girls like me") or Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, our hair would lighten and our skin would darken. At least, that was the plan.

I glanced at Eileen as I read; I could study her responses to my reading without the usual awkwardness when looking at a sighted person. She seemed transparent, like water. Sometimes her brow would furrow, other times a faint smile crossed her face. I was careful to enunciate my words so that she could hear clearly when she reviewed the tape that evening.

She'd heard that if you played a tape before you went to bed, and even while you were sleeping, you'd learn the material better. "It gets into your head," she said. "Like in REM sleep."

"Cool."

Eileen was the closest I'd ever been to "cool." Though blind, she had a confidence I lacked. She had an older sister and two older brothers, one who'd just come back from Vietnam. I, on the other hand, was shy, an only child, "gifted" in the days they let kids skip a grade, which is why, even though Eileen and I were in the same classes, she was two years older. I liked that she was older—as if it were catching, as if, by being around her, I could grow up fast.

Looking back, I wonder why my parents never questioned the days and nights I spent away from home, ostensibly with Eileen, studying, or at the library. I wondered, even then, in their seeming trust in all that I told them. Perhaps it was easier to believe the best, not to see that the world around us had shifted—the Sixties had come and exploded like a giant multicolored balloon. My father complained that his coworkers wore blue, green or—god forbid, pink— "hippie" shirts to work. My father wore white shirts, from Brooks Brothers, ironed by my mother. He often raged about hippies and talked of moving us to Australia, as if that were a place safe from the plague.

I, on the other hand, longed to become infected. I researched all things "hippy" like I did with most things, through books. My mother, always supportive of my reading, gave me money for the bookstore at the mall. She didn't seem to see the titles: Carlos Castaneda's *A Separate Reality*, Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception*, Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*, books with titles like *The Sensuous Woman* and *The Happy Hooker*.

I started with *The Politics of Experience*. In this book, the author believed that sane people were crazy and crazy ones—especially those labeled "schizophrenic," or "psychotic," and locked behind bars—were the only ones truly aware of the nature of reality. If wondered if you could punch through a door or membrane, expand, as Timothy Leary said, your consciousness. To get beyond arbitrary definitions of "right" and "wrong," "good" and "bad." We were in The Age of Aquarius, after all, a new breed, knowing so much more than the nerds and squares who came before—our parents. And the idea that I, fourteen-year-old Leanne Davis, could enter a new and truer reality —far better than the boring here and now—tickled and bloomed in my fancy.

'Do you think it's true?" I asked Eileen one morning after math class.

"What?"

"That crazy people are sane and sane people are crazy?"

She laughed. "*That's* crazy." She fingered her cane. "But if you want, we could visit Uncle Walter."

Uncle Walter lived in the Boston State Hospital, formerly the Boston Lunatic Asylum, which is what most of us still called it. Every month, someone in Eileen's family brought Uncle Walter a fresh supply of underwear, socks, Kleenex and deodorant, items that vanished in the understaffed asylum—along with many other things, less tangible things, Eileen implied.

‘Sure,” I said. I’d finished my book and was eager to test its hypothesis.

Two weeks later, as the asylum loomed into view, I began to have second thoughts. “Okay,” said Eileen’s older sister, in a cheery voice, as she dropped us off. “Be back in an hour,” and then the car pulled away and it was just Eileen, who was blind, and me, in the shadow of the great stone building with all its spires and turrets, jagged and jutting from the rooftop.

We walked underneath an arched entryway. We signed in, and as my eyes adjusted from the bright outside, one of the staff, a young man with tired eyes drifted up to take us to Uncle Walter. We followed him through dim corridors; I was struck by the smell of human waste, cries echoing from what felt like a honeycomb, or labyrinth, with barred enclosures like pens, where half-clothed men and women stood, banging bedpans, staring at us yelling “Fuck,” “Shit,” and other words I didn’t know and didn’t want to know.

I kept my eyes focused on the door at the end of the hall. We stood beside it, waiting as the young man jingled his keys. I took a step to the side.

A hand gripped my elbow.

I screamed.

The hand released my elbow.

“You’re scaring them,” said our guide. “It’s okay, everyone,” he called out, and opened the door.

Uncle Walter was on the third floor, in the visiting area, though we were the only visitors that sunny Saturday morning. Our escort, having done his job—perhaps they didn’t pay him enough for more—left us there: Eileen with her cane, me, clutching the package of underwear like a shield, gripping the book Eileen said Uncle Walter would be so happy to have me read.

Uncle Walter swayed back and forth in a rocking chair. He seemed not to see us. We pulled up chairs beside him, and Eileen introduced me. He rubbed a puckered scar on the back of his buzz-cut head and rocked faster, more frenzied now, squeezing the bag of underwear we’d given him while Eileen held out the book for me. Eileen was smiling. She couldn’t see the man in the corner, masturbating, or the other man smearing feces on his forearms.

“You’re a good reader,” she said, urging me on, complimenting me on the rhythm and tone of my voice, how it dipped low, how I paused in all the right places: *“Frog, would you be my friend?” asked Toad. “Why yes, said Toad, and they walked off together, arm in arm.”*

***

We never went back to the asylum. We never spoke of it. I was relieved, for if Eileen had invited me back, I'd have to confess the childish feelings that threatened to overwhelm me, opening like a great gulf before me.

Soon, however, I decided what we really needed was to learn about love. I'd heard about "free love," and "the "summer of love"— and though Eileen and I had missed the Sixties by almost a decade—the aura remained. We could be hippies.

I studied my books, looking for clues on how "sexy" worked, for that seemed the key to love. Female power, the male glance, but mostly what I tried to find in those pages—true love, whatever that was, of course--but in the meantime, excitement, adventure, and whatever adults seemed to know but strove to keep hidden from their children.

As I read, I tried not to think about the last day of classes, when I'd worn a skin-tight turtleneck, and outside my locker, Scott Stevens squeezed my left breast and ran down the hall, laughing. And then, as Eileen and I lined up to board the school busses for our rides home (she rode bus 11 and I rode bus 8) as I walked beside the curb holding her hand—for her cane was awkward with the crush of students—another boy yelled from an open bus window: "Lesbos!"

If I were an expert on love, surely, I'd understand these reactions. I'd know what to do and how to be. All life's mysteries would be opened to me; I wouldn't stumble in such darkness.

"What we need," I said to Eileen that first week of summer, "Is to lose our virginities."

"Boys talk about it all the time," said Eileen.

"Yeah. Why not girls?"

"We could hitchhike."

We could fling ourselves out there, into the wide world and see what would happen.

We bought matching halter-tops and low-rise jeans. The first time we stuck out our thumbs along Route 20, a young woman gave us a ride. As we exited her VW and made our way down the narrow, cobblestone streets toward Kendall Square, where I'd remembered feeding pigeons as a child, two emaciated men stepped out of an alley and hailed us.

"Hey ladies."

"Hey," we said.

One man wore a checkered hat and a purple silk shirt. The other sported a green jumpsuit. The one with the hat smiled broadly and shouted: "Open your mouth!"

Too shocked to question, I opened my mouth. Both men peered in.

"Nice teeth!" said the one with the jumpsuit.

"You can always tell quality by the teeth," said the other.

I glanced at Eileen who stood, serene and statuesque, leaning against her cane.

"How old are you?" said the man in the checkered hat.

"Sixteen," Eileen volunteered.

"Too young," they chimed in unison.

"Come back and see us when you're eighteen," said the one in the jumpsuit.

***

The next time we hitchhiked, a battered yellow van stopped to let us in.

"Welcome to the Yellow Submarine!" cried a pale, mustached man who said his name was Matt, The Space Cadet. His crew-cut friend was named Roger.

They'd been to Vietnam, where they'd learned to garrote which was, they explained, a way to kill people using barbed wire.

"We were part of a top-secret CIA experiment," said Matt.

"Yeah," said Roger, "they tested LSD on us."

"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds!" they yelled, nudging each other, giggling.

I'd read Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception* and figured if Huxley, someone famous, had tried mescaline, then it was probably okay, but I wasn't sure about LSD. They showed us movies about it in school and though we made fun of these movies (*Do you believe that?* scoffed Eileen), still, the part where a young woman, high on acid, jumped out of a seventh-story window made an impression.

"So," Matt went on, stepping on the gas pedal, "Lucies," as he called us now, scratching dry flakes of skin off his cheek with a dirty fingernail and rubbing his red eyes before putting his hands back on the wheel. "Hold on! Get ready for blast off!"

Eileen and I clutched each other as we shot down the highway in the Space Mobile. The two Space Cadets sucked on a pipe filled with embers of an unknown substance and passed it to us. Eileen and I hacked and coughed as tall, glass-sided buildings whizzed by in a blur. The roar of the engine felt like thunder as we traveled through tunnels lit with shuddering fluorescence.

"You wanna get laid?" asked Matt in a matter of fact way, and I mumbled "sure," as if this had been the plan all along, which I guessed it was.

Soon the Space Mobile jerked to a halt beside a crumbling two-story house. We climbed a rusted fire escape to Matt and Roger's second-floor apartment.

"I like your tree," I said to Matt, pointing to a small blue spruce in the weed-choked yard.

"I like yours, too," he said, winking at me.

We walked through the dirty kitchen. A sour smell lingered into the living room where we sat on a sagging, mustard-colored sofa.

Roger turned on the stereo and fired up the pipe again. “Now,” he said, “for the good stuff.” I stared at a poster on the wall that read, “The Doors,” in psychedelic lettering. Smoke rose from the pipe like a miniature chimney, and maybe because I’d heard that the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana was THC, the word “THE” rang through a door in my mind. “The”— a word so small, yet so essential—it was everywhere and in everything—how had I not noticed? And somehow, at that moment, I understood the mystery of “the” and how it fit into every other mystery I’d longed to know.

Matt put his arm around me. “I love you,” he said. He put his tongue in my mouth. It felt long and slimy, like a tentacle. It seemed to fill my throat so that I couldn’t breathe. Drool seeped down my chin and my eyes burned. I wanted to say “Stop!” but couldn’t speak. When the tentacle finally came out, I coughed. Tears formed in my eyes.

“Oh, baby, you need someone to teach you how to kiss.” He stood, put out his hand for me to follow him, but I couldn’t move.

He crossed the room and cracked open a door, and from where I sat on the sofa, I could see the edge of a large mattress, covered with a dirty white sheet.

“Tim-ber,” yelled Matt as he crashed face down on the mattress.

“What’s going on?” A skinny woman with half-grey, half-blond streaked hair rushed out of the room. She glared at Roger, then at us. “What are those kids doing here?”

“Sheila! Chill! Join the party!”

“I have to work,” Sheila said. “Somebody’s gotta pay the bills around here.”

“We can go,” I offered.

“Do you have a phone?” asked Eileen. “I’ll call my sister.”

“There’s one right in front of you.” Sheila pointed to a telephone on top a stack of phone books. “What are you, blind?”

***

Weeks later, I was still trying to tell Eileen about the revelation I’d had of “the.”

“The definite article, right? Like ‘a’?”

“Yeah, it sounds kind of stupid now, but—"

“You can’t just have ‘the.’ Something always comes after—it’s like the start of a sentence, you know? I mean, what’s the rest of the sentence?”

When I didn’t answer, she perked up with, “Remember when that guy said he loved you?”

“Yeah.”

“And kissed you, right? What was that like?”

“Well—" I wanted sound sophisticated, like the women in the books. “Voluptuous.”

“Wow,” said Eileen. We kept walking. Neither of us said, at least we dodged that bullet. Survived that adventure, and none the worse for it. We’d met some hippies. I even kissed one. The start of ninth grade was almost upon us, and as we rounded the edge of the road bordering the ice cream shop, we heard honking and yelling.

“Lucies!”

The Space Mobile, in all its yellow glory, was bearing down upon us from behind. Matt’s head out the window. He and Roger waving wildly. “Where’ve you been? We’ve been looking everywhere for you! We’re off to the Party of All Parties! Get in! It’ll blow your minds!”

I stood for a moment, not knowing what to do. Then Roger got out and slid open the door, and Eileen climbed in, hauling her cane behind her. As the door slammed and the van shot toward the highway, Eileen and I held hands. Her palm was damp; I could feel the pulse of her blood, the pulse of my own blood, the cold trickle of our sweat, blending together. I wanted to be back in the park we’d visited yesterday.

We’d gone to feed pigeons. We sprinkled breadcrumbs on our hands, felt the tickle of tiny clawed feet as the pigeons balanced on our arms and legs. Their iridescent necks bulged. We laughed. The grass was an almost neon shade of green. Across the street, a man with a placard called out: “Do you know where you’ll spend eternity?”

And then we visited the school for the blind, the place Eileen had learned braille. It was cool inside. I marveled at the high ceilings, the brass door handles glinting in the semi-dark, the orangey scent of wood polish filling up the air like incense. Through a picture window, I watched the cars and trucks speed past--adults going about their adult business, knowing exactly where they were going and how they were going to get there. I felt a stirring--something inside me—and shut my eyes. Eileen smoothed the metal braille on the walls with her fingers, tracing the formations of raised dots, shapes and shadows-- rounding the corners, finding her way--intoning words to herself like the chant of an ancient mystery, as if she, now, were reading to me in a language I didn’t—or couldn’t—understand.

I’d almost forgotten about the Party of all Parties when the Space Mobile screeched to a stop outside a tall, gray building. “Come on,” Matt and Roger urged as they ran past us up several flights of stairs. Eileen and I lumbered up, finally reaching a door that opened to a cavernous loft. Colored lights pulsed in the smoke so that objects looked like people and people like objects. Was that an armchair or a woman? A lampshade or a man with a hat? Bodies covered the floor. Eileen navigated our way with her cane.

We squeezed on a couch next to Matt and a dark-haired woman. Someone passed a water pipe. Music boomed from the stereo, something about a stairway to heaven.

A man sitting across from us took out a small, pearl-handled revolver. He opened the cylinder, spinning it several times as if for effect. Then he lined six bullets on a stool.

"Hollowpoints," said Roger.

"Torpedoes!" yelled Matt. "Batten down the hatches! We're gonna blow!"

The dark-haired woman giggled.

We sat there, by the bullets, inhaling various substances.

I turned to Matt but he was kissing the dark-haired woman, sticking his tongue in her mouth. He unbuttoned her shirt, right in front of me, his hand on her breast. I could hear the soft sucking of their kissing.

His leg was still touching my leg but he wasn't looking at me. "Baby," he said to the woman, "I love you."

Roger was rocking back and forth in a chair, rubbing his buzz-cut head.

I thought of the word "love."

I thought of the word: "garrote."

"I'm sick," said Eileen.

"Me too."

No one noticed as we threaded our way through the bodies. We made it down the stairs and as we opened the door to the street, a blast of cold air hit our faces and Eileen clutched her stomach, bent over, and vomited.

"Are you … okay?" I asked, but she didn't answer.

She just gripped my hand as if it were the only sure thing in the world.

We stepped onto the sidewalk and were carried forward by the swell of the crowd. Taxis dodged and wove in the street. A plastic bag ballooned and summersaulted in front of us. A bus spewed exhaust. A beer can rattled to the gutter. People jostled us. Tiny drops of rain pierced our faces.

Three teenaged boys walked toward us. They gawked, and Eileen held my hand even tighter, if that were possible—and this—I still don't know why—perhaps in our disheveled state —lipstick smeared, blue and black mascara staining our cheeks like bruises—all those eyes staring— were they saying "Lesbos?"— was why I let go of her hand and she stumbled in front of the traffic and brakes screeched and horns blared as she stood—stunned— still reaching for my hand.

Only many years later, can I revisit this scene from the book of my life: Eileen and I, our friendship over, the pure, chaste love of it gone—for it was love, I see now, so close it felt like atmosphere. And I see her now, clear as day, standing there, yelling something I couldn't

understand, then straightening up, wiping her face, putting her cane in front of her; taking one step and then another; making her way across the street—with all the cars and trucks and busses stopping for her as she passed—parting the waters like a queen.

PHASES

Scott Ragland

Morris decided to walk his black lab through Phase II, after work but before dark, to see how progress was coming along. He lived in Phase I, finished that spring, a pin oak sapling planted in each front yard within a few feet of the still chalk-white sidewalks. Behind him on the other side of the wall he could hear the traffic going by on GA-369, mostly east toward the Coal Mountain crossroads.

He passed the community clubhouse and waved at the parents watching their children climbing the jungle gym. Older kids played half-court basketball and he stopped for a moment to watch, clapping when a boy who lived a couple houses down from him made a three-pointer.

"Great shot!" he shouted.

The kid turned to look at him and raised his arms toward the sky, holding up three fingers on each hand.

"Automatic!" the kid shouted.

In Phase II, the street grid was done but they'd just started building the houses, on bigger lots than Phase I, with three trees apiece and setbacks deep enough to rationalize getting a riding mower. Morris wondered if maybe he and his wife should have waited, maybe splurged and gotten a place on the lake near one of the entrances to the walking trail, maybe moved up to The Claire or The Colton and used the fifth bedroom as a home office. He pictured a front yard with a fence to keep the lab in, to sniff around off leash, space for their little boy to hit a whiffle ball off a tee. He pictured scalloped pickets, pressure-treated pine or maybe vinyl to minimize upkeep.

The first place he came to under construction was a two-story with a triple garage, most likely The Sophia. A crew of Mexicans was framing the walls. Morris could hear them talking in Spanish, between the thumps of nail guns. He understood a word here and there, remnants from his language-requirement classes in college. Something about beers after work, the Atlanta United game on the big screen.

The lab lifted his leg and started to pee on a pile of 1x6s stacked in the driveway. Morris pulled him back and waved apologetically at a guy putting up a stud in the garage.

"*Lo siento*," Morris said.

"It's nothing," the guy said, smiling. "They're pressure-treated, for the covered porch."

Morris smiled back. The guy turned away to check the stud with a level.

The kid who lived down from Morris came riding up the middle of the street on a skateboard, a basketball tucked under one arm, his corn-colored hair curling out from

beneath a Falcons cap. Morris figured he'd taken a long route home, to enjoy the smooth pavement of the empty streets.

"Build the wall!" the kid shouted as he rolled by, pushing off to pick up speed.

"*¡No entiendo!*" the guy shouted back.

Morris watched the kid disappear around a corner. In the distance he could see the Phase I gate out to GA-369 sliding closed behind a car.

"I'm sorry," he said.

HOW WE OVERCAME
E. E. King

“Radical, black, lesbian, crusader Jacala Umoja, gave a speech at University Green last night. Over one hundred people attended,” simpered Angela White, news reader on *The A.M. Wake Up and Drink the Coffee Morning Show.*

Radical, black, lesbian, crusader. I smiled. I’d been a shy, quiet child and a shy quiet adult. I hadn’t become ‘radical’ until I heard Allen Goodman’s plan to use the eternity™ as a punishment.

It was a year of retribution. There had been unrest in the streets and injustice in the courts. The rich drifted in a world so removed from the poor it might have been a different planet. Disease haunted the cities and politicians looked for someone to blame. As usual they found, the victims.

“Societies have tried the death penalty. They have tried jails. Both failed miserably. Chemical alteration, and castration have been more successful, but still,” Goodman waved his hands as if trying to stop a runaway train. “We have murders.

“Well, under my administration, if you murder someone, their eternity™ will be removed and put inside your head beside your own.” Allen waited.

The crowd went crazy. Of course, they would have gone crazy whatever he said. Goodman had that effect on some people.

At birth, the eternity™ chip was inserted into the base of the spine. There it recorded every love affair, sorrow, and dream. It cataloged conflict, compiled commitments, and assembled a collection of memories in a chip that was supposed to contain the person. After death, the eternity™ would be removed, inserted into a computer in the research center, free to spend eternity in a heavenly program.

But there were problems. Eternity™s were flat. They had attitudes, but no feelings. Memories, but no emotions. Desire, but no love. Hunger, but no satisfaction.

The scientists and technicians went back to their labs and their screens and tried again.

I worked with the eternity™s, removing them after death, and testing them in limited systems. The eternity™ chips were not virtual people, they were not simulated spirits, or cyber ghosts, but they were something. Not quite alive, but also not entirely without consciousness.

And then Allen Goodman, with his tales of fear and hate climbed to power. Innocents were shot, protesters branded, and the eternity™ became a punishment.

Under Goodman's law, if you murdered someone, their eternity™ was removed and inserted into the base of your spine, right next to your own.

"It will stop hate crimes," Goodman roared. "Imagine a white man having a radical, black lesbian in his head! What could be worse?"

I can think of something.

It was then I began to question my work. True, eternity™s were not souls, but they were something. Memories? Snippets of love and fear and hope. Was it right to treat them as objects? Was it right to insert them into another's mind? We didn't know enough. Could two sets of memories and beliefs live in one head? Was the eternity™ conscious enough to suffer?

We'd already jumped too quickly to accept the new vaccines. That had resulted in heart attacks and birth defects. History repeats itself and historians repeat each other. But we didn't listen.

I began to make speeches. Surprisingly, I was good at it. I spoke of history and hate, of empathy and forgiveness, of DNA and truth, of entanglement and connection. I talked about my work on the eternity™, and my sorrow that so much money and time were devoted into creating eternity™s, and so little into making life good for all its creatures.

It was late October. I stood before a crowd; arms raised high, both looking forward and looking back. It could have been a thousand years before, when people gathered on hill or plain to hear truth. So face to face. So personal. It was unusual for our time. There must have been at least three hundred people. An unheard-of turnout! I wanted to be worthy.

Listen, I'd been going to say*. We have put our technology and learning into creating a perfect soul and we have failed. But I have worked with eternity™s and though they are not complete personalities, they are something. The memory of a sunny morning, the fragrance of warm cookies on a cold day, the soft brush of a first kiss.*

We are told that the eternity™s don't feel, but isn't that what they said, about slaves, women, and animals in times past? Isn't this just old prejudice clothed in new words?

Isn't it true that almost all the eternity™s inserted into murdering skulls are minorities, and women, because, as always, most of the killers are white men?

They say they know eternity™s don't feel because of the algorithms and system parameters. They say there can be no blame or responsibility. But who designed the algorithm? Who described the parameters?

But the crowd was so big and they had traveled so far, I felt my words were not enough. So, I began by quoting the most beautiful truth I knew.

“To quote the immortal Martin Luther King Jr,” I said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can.”

It was so still. Smoke and melancholy perfumed the air. It was my last fragrance, my eternal perfume. The twilight exploded so swiftly, so I didn’t even realize I’d been hit. Not until I woke up. Not until I looked in the mirror.

Instead of my large, dark eyes, small, hateful, watery blue irises dotted with pinpoint pupils glared at me out of meaty pockets of flesh. Where was my smooth, brown skin? This face was pasty, red nose delicately marbled with crimson and blue veins, thin as the synapses connecting the eternity™ to the spine.

My short, kinky, black hair was gone, replaced by a bald head fringed by white-blond scrub. It was not mine, but it was familiar.

It was Bubba Chaney. A leader of the White Boyz. A hater of first order. A killer of first degree. And then I remembered.

“Imagine a white man having a radical, black lesbian in his head,” Goodman had said. “What could be worse?”

I can think of something. Being a radical, black, lesbian inside of a cracker. is one

Bubba’s small, mean, blue eyes looked at me in the mirror frightened and bleary. He hadn’t slept well and no wonder. He couldn’t see me, but he could feel me, thinking inside him, using his brain. He reached for his washcloth and scrubbed violently, hoping that movement, or pain would block me out. Unfortunately, we were one. I had been mixed into his brain like salt into water, like oil into skin, like rage into a storm.

They’d said eternity™s weren’t whole. They’d said eternity™s couldn’t feel. Once again, they were wrong.

I was whole and I was burning. I’d make Chaney suffer as I suffered. As women and minorities have always suffered at mercies of those without mercy.

And then I heard it.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth only ends up making the whole world blind and toothless.

It was an eternity*™.*

Though the eternity™ punishment was fairly new, murder was common. Already there were hundreds of us, ‘imperfect’ eternity™s, sentenced to live out the remainder of our existence inside our murderer’s mind, or more accurately at the base of his spine.

But though we were separated, all eternity™s were connected. We had been made in the same lab of the same stuff. Information flowed between us like radio waves. Our convictions, ideals, and beliefs balanced like surfers on invisible waves of electricity and magnetism that raced from brain to brain at the speed of light.

Knowledge passed between us, like currents into the sea, like soap into water, like clarity into fear.

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to become your enemy. thought another eternity™.

It cut through my rage. It brought me back to myself.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can. I thought back.

It was unplanned and unconsidered, perhaps the best revolutions are. It was not a rebellion of fear. What could they do to us? We were already dead. Less than whole. Incomplete programs in our killer's brain. We had nothing to lose, not even ourselves. Through the language electric, we screamed.

Hate cannot kill hate, only love can.

If we had spoken aloud, we would have been incomprehensible, a collision of dialects, a babble of tongues. But these were not words, but philosophies, a spark that flew from one to another of us, a hailstone of ideas pelting the dry soil of hate.

Hate cannot kill hate, only love can.

And so we loved, we pitied every angry racist imprisoned in their own brain, alongside us. We mourned their childhood of hate. We sorrowed at their fear. We forgave their ignorance. We loved.

We are one, we thought.

Can there be a cacophony of communication? A devastation of understanding? An apocalypse of love? If so, then that's what this was. And because we were not speaking in words, our thoughts overloaded the thoughts of our killers. Their hate was destroyed by our love. It was instant, fatal, and irrevocable. We had finally overcome.

THE CARDBOARD BOX
Mary Salisbury

The summer I turned twelve started out like most summers. We went swimming in the river. Everything was calm and boring. We lived in the country and I'd never been afraid of it.

My older brother Joe worked at the local gas station, but his car broke down one morning, so Mom and I drove him in. At nine am we started back up our long dirt driveway through a tunnel of trees, cresting a hill before our house.

Then I saw it. My mind froze like when you're looking at something you've never seen before and never expected to see. It wasn't a deer. Deer were a dime a dozen around our place. It wasn't our pony, though it was brown.

With one powerful leap over our car it was gone, sweeping up the mountain. Its image hung suspended: long strong powerful legs, chiseled predatory face.

Mom and I said it at the exact same time. "Cougar."
I remember looking at my house, my yard, my basketball court, differently. What I'd taken for granted was gone. At night I twisted in my bed staring out the window at a long sturdy branch of the old oak that curved gracefully nearby. The cougar was a cat, after all, capable of climbing, and I couldn't forget the way its legs had looked—powerful and purposeful. I didn't like being outside anymore. But as the days wore on I began to venture out cautiously, usually waiting until Joe went out. That cougar feared nothing, after all.

The weather was hot and dry, the meadow grass turning pale yellow. One evening a storm came and dry lightning flashed. The next morning smoke

covered our valley. Two small fires had started, but not close enough to worry about.

Then the wind changed and the lightning fires grew. The next day a fire truck drove up. "We aren't worried yet, but we're cautioning folks who live up here to be ready." The firefighter wore a yellow helmet and a lime green jacket and wasn't much older than Joe.

I was already on alert over the cougar, now this.

"Julie," Mom said, handing me a big cardboard box. "Fill this box with your favorite things."

"In case of what?" I wanted to hear it straight.

"In case we need to evacuate."

"Will we?"

"I hope not, honey, but just in case."

I set the box on my bed, wondering what I'd bring if I could only bring one box. All my stuff would never fit into one box. I'd need days to pack, ten boxes, three suitcases. It was impossible.

I thought of that cougar, the fear running through me like the lightning. I'd gone twelve years never knowing this feeling and now here it was, twice in one summer.

"That was Ed," Dad called out. "He can see the fire from his place, off on the ridge, but moving closer."

I stared at the empty box. On my wall were posters of kittens, basketball players, and horses. My bulletin board was covered with team pictures from soccer and basketball. I had photographs of friends in frames. Some were tacked to the wall, making a bright arch around my closet.

I'm not the neatest most organized person in the world and there was a lot of stuff to wade through. *How could I decide?* I placed my little brown mouse that I slept with (not real!) in the box. I reached under my bed, grabbing a shoebox filled with secret notes.

I couldn't bring everything. I had to choose. My box was half full. I hadn't chosen anything anyone else would think was a big deal, but these things were important to me. I had a favorite pair of green Converses with white trim. I shoved them in. I had an American girl doll—Kirsten—who I still talked to at night. I put her in. I decided to wear my Kobe Bryant jersey and my favorite blue jean shorts.

I sat on my bed looking out the window wondering what the cougar was doing during the fire. I thought of this new wildfire fear and wanted to trade it in right now for the old cougar fear. But you don't get to trade—I had to face both.

"Julie, Joe," Mom called. The phone again, and I heard Dad say, "Okay."

I stood in my doorway and knew before she said it. I turned to get my box and looked at my room in case it was the last time.

"The fire is closing in. Firemen told Ed we need to go."

As I carried my box to the car I looked around at everything I'd taken for granted: my house, the yard, the trees, our land. I prayed I'd be given the chance to never take them for granted again. Biscuit, our Calico cat, was crouched on the hood of the car. I scooped her up after sliding my box in the trunk. Joe had our dog, Max, already crated in the back seat. Dad was out at the far end of the apple orchard hollering for Polly, our pony, who spent most of her days up on the meadow. Boxes were crammed in the trunk and stacked in the middle of the seat. I climbed in, squeezing Biscuit to my chest, burying my head in her soft fur. I guess I must've been crying because fur clung to my cheeks as I raised my head when Joe got in, squeezing Max's crate onto his lap. Dad got in shaking his head. "Polly wouldn't come. She's too scared, but we've got to go."

Dad dropped us off at the only hotel in town; we'd gotten one of the last rooms before people were told to go to the elementary school. He left immediately to go back for Polly, saying he'd be back as soon as he could. He told us later how she'd been standing under our house, the place where the porch rose above the ground and made a kind of cave. The fire had been close, and he'd had to get help from a far off neighbor to lead her out and trailer her before taking her to a friend's place away from the fire.

The wildfire raged across our meadow that night and split in two and roared through our woods, skipping the houses, before the firefighters gained control of it two days later.

When we got the all clear to return home, I unpacked the cardboard box with a new reverence toward my chosen things. As for the cougar, I never saw it again, but I knew it was still out there, and I thought about it a lot, how it made me feel fear, and how the wildfire taught me about different degrees of fear. As I watched the sky darken, I had a feeling beyond my years of danger and uncertainty. The sunset blazed a bloody red, and smoke still hung sharp in the air. I wished someone had the power to make the uncertainty go away, but as I spread out the items from my box I sensed certainty was like the wind, something that could change and alter course. A tender meaning of life I would barely understand until I got older began to take hold of me and I felt a whisper of inexplicable courage during those first moments back in my room, standing alone and looking out my window. Yes, danger was out there, but I had faced it and acted, and I could do so again.

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An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth only ends up making the whole world blind and toothless.

It was an eternity*™.*

Though the eternity™ punishment was fairly new, murder was common. Already there were hundreds of us, 'imperfect' eternity™s, sentenced to live out the remainder of our existence inside our murderer's mind, or more accurately at the base of his spine.

But though we were separated, all eternity™s were connected. We had been made in the same lab of the same stuff. Information flowed between us like radio waves. Our convictions, ideals, and beliefs balanced like surfers on invisible waves of electricity and magnetism that raced from brain to brain at the speed of light.

Knowledge passed between us, like currents into the sea, like soap into water, like clarity into fear.

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to become your enemy. thought another eternity™.

It cut through my rage. It brought me back to myself.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can. I thought back.

It was unplanned and unconsidered, perhaps the best revolutions are. It was not a rebellion of fear. What could they do to us? We were already dead. Less than whole. Incomplete programs in our killer's brain. We had nothing to lose, not even ourselves. Through the language electric, we screamed.

Hate cannot kill hate, only love can.

If we had spoken aloud, we would have been incomprehensible, a collision of dialects, a babble of tongues. But these were not words, but philosophies, a spark that flew from one to another of us, a hailstone of ideas pelting the dry soil of hate.

Hate cannot kill hate, only love can.

And so we loved, we pitied every angry racist imprisoned in their own brain, alongside us. We mourned their childhood of hate. We sorrowed at their fear. We forgave their ignorance. We loved.

We are one, we thought.

Can there be a cacophony of communication? A devastation of understanding? An apocalypse of love? If so, then that's what this was. And because we were not speaking in words, our thoughts overloaded the thoughts of our killers. Their hate was destroyed by our love. It was instant, fatal, and irrevocable. We had finally overcome.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

CODE TALKERS
Excerpted from the new novel, *Railroad Girl*
Brenda Peterson

In this spacious and mysterious desert, we journeyed to meet a Navajo code talker. Stubby lichens pushed up through sand to embrace sharp rocks and purple spikes of thistle; sagebrush somersaulted alongside the reservation road like fellow travelers. With the fierce desert wind, the skeletal tumbleweeds made swifter progress than our battered pickup.

We bumped along a road so rutted that my teeth chattered with each pothole. Soon the dirt road was a little more navigable. Signs of habitation. The desert turned an unexpected green in an oasis of willow trees and grass. Three humped red rock ridges loomed ahead. Right in the middle of one cliff was a massive round window through which the azure sky shone like a wide-open eye.

"Window Rock," my Navajo friend, Slim, confirmed quietly, with pride. "Not much farther to my Uncle Leo's."

Now the desert was populated with occasional round, mud-made hogans, their single stovepipes smoking. Bands of sheep trotted along, herded by young boys and a few nipping dogs. At last, Slim pulled up to a well-kept hogan with a red truck parked outside. No one came out to greet us.

"Remember, it's our tradition to wait until the person we're visiting knows we are here and welcomes us," Slim informed me.

We waited until a tall man opened the wooden door to his hogan and politely motioned us inside. The round room was so smoky I couldn't make out the man at first.

His face was shrouded somehow; but he was handsome and self-possessed. There was an authority in his sculpted chin, his shoulder-length black hair like a curtain hiding his face, his oval eyes steady and penetrating behind large glasses. He seemed both studious and strong. The Native man was obviously an elder, but he moved with the athletic grace of someone much younger. A man who still worked with his hands.

"Slim," Uncle Leo's voice was low and unexpectedly melodious. His tone held some fondness, but also some sly humor.

“Uncle,” Slim nodded and gave him a hearty embrace. “I’ve brought a friend to hear your war stories.”

Leo nodded and motioned to a stool near the wooden table that was covered with sheep’s wool. Slim and I took our seats. Leo now turned to me. The smoke around his face cleared and I could see kindness in his dark eyes. And something even more unexpected: curiosity. “Didn’t get your name?”

“Miranda.”
“Good to meet you, Miranda,” he reached out to shake my hand.
His handshake was firm. It steadied me somehow.
He smiled faintly and nodded at his nephew. “Like my nephew, you can just call

me ‘Uncle Leo.’”
At last Uncle Leo turned his full attention to Slim. What passed between them

was unspoken, but the very definition of close family. Tribe. At last Uncle Leo said something to Slim in Navajo that I couldn’t follow. Maybe Slim was assuring his uncle that he could trust me, a stranger. Someone who longed to hear history told by those who lived it.

“Our loyalty is always to family first . . . tribe . . . homeland . . .” Uncle Leo paused, and then added, “that’s what the war reminded us.”

He was talking about World War II and the role his tribe’s code talkers played in winning it. But just as I was about to ask him direct questions, Uncle Leo turned away to his kerosene cook stove. “Hungry?” he asked.

“Starved!” Slim said.

As he puttered with the skillet, waiting for the grease to hiss so he could make fry bread, Uncle Leo began to talk in that low, musical voice of his. His tone was so level, he might as well have been giving us a recipe for some traditional meal; but there was a quiet intensity to each word, as if it cost him something.

“I was about the same age as you kids, when the soldiers came to our boarding school looking for recruits,” began Uncle Leo. “Navajo kids had been stolen from their parents and forced into these white schools . . . more like prison camps. If we spoke our own language, we were brutally punished . . .” He didn’t turn around to face us, but his voice rose a little above the sizzle of the stove.

“The Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor and their troops controlled the South Pacific. They were winning the war because they could decode any of our messages . . .”

“Stop,” Slim said suddenly. “Didn’t you sign a secrecy oath, Uncle Leo. Sure you want to tell the *whole* story to an outsider. A reporter?”

“It’s time to tell it all so we won’t be forgotten,” the elder’s voice dropped, and again that strange tenderness in his tone toward his nephew, as if he were teaching him something Slim had simply forgotten. Or perhaps never learned.

“But you promised the government,” Slim said nervously.

“The government signs treaties that are made to be broken,” Leo said softly.

Leo turned back to the stove, pouring fry bread batter into the skillet with a practiced flourish.

“So . . . you couldn’t speak your own language?” I asked, raising my voice above the frying pan sizzle to urge Uncle Leo on.

“Right . . . but somebody got the idea that the Japanese would never figure out Navajo . . . so few people spoke it and it’s really complicated. I was one of the only boys in ninth grade who hadn’t given up secretly speaking my own language.” Uncle Leo expertly used a spatula to flip the fry bread. It was a golden brown and smelled delicious. “Next thing I knew, I was tossed into a train with Marine tags around my neck bound for a boot-camp barracks at Camp Pendleton.” Here, Uncle Leo stopped and turned to me. He offered me the first of the fry bread.

“We Navajos created a code, an alphabet based on our obscure language,” he continued, “that same language they’d systematically tried to eliminate.” He served Slim the rest of his fragrant fry bread. He paused as we slathered the bread with butter and some homemade apricot jam. After satisfying himself that our hunger was sated, he added proudly, “The Japanese never did break our code.”

“Tell her about Iwo Jima,” Slim demanded, his mouth full of fry bread.

Uncle Leo poured more batter into his skillet. “Such a tiny island, Iwo Jima . . . and so much sacrifice,” Uncle Leo began, his voice almost a whisper. His face was fierce with memory. It was how people look when they were trying to remember something too painful to feel all over again. “Only eight square miles . . . and deep into that tiny island,

twenty-two thousand Japanese had dug out hundreds of tunnels. They had to protect this island because if Americans captured it, we could use Iwo Jima as an airfield to bomb Japan directly."

Uncle Leo paused to gaze out the small door of his hogan. "Some of us code talkers figured it was a suicide mission. Black men, red men, we were always sent to the front lines first. But we code talkers *volunteered* to go there."

I realized I was witnessing the passing on of history and leaned nearer.

"On the boat to Iwo Jima, I said my prayers with the corn pollen my mother gave me for protection," Uncle Leo explained. "There were about 100 of us code talkers dispatched with our short-wave radios. It was 120 degrees. We never slept for two or three days at a time. So many men died on that little island. Some of them my friends."

We all fell silent, eating our fry bread. It was as if the war were still going on.

"If it hadn't been for the code talkers," Uncle Leo concluded, "the Marines would never have captured Iwo Jima and raised that famous flag . . . that blasted island was the bloodiest battle of the whole damn war."

"But you saved millions of lives," Slim laid a hand on Uncle Leo's shoulder.

"For all the good it did Navajos." An expression crossed Uncle Leo's brow that I'd not seen in him before. Bitterness "No parades when we came back home . . . we had to sign those damned secrecy oaths. For decades we were not allowed to tell our story. Most people in this country still don't know it. So, the story hides deep inside . . . mostly nightmares." Uncle Leo turned to Slim. "Some of the other code talkers have died without anybody even in their families knowing how important they were in winning the war . . . that's why I'm telling you now." He called Slim by his Navajo name and the boy straightened in his folding chair as if suddenly taller.

For the first time, Uncle Leo looked his age. "Do you know that it took years and many visits to Washington D.C., for Navajo soldiers who fought to get any veterans' benefits?"

"Do you regret it?" I asked. "serving a country that denied you so much?"

The elder was quiet, contemplative. At last, he turned to his nephew, his face blank with love. "*He's* here. You're here. I'm still here," he said, his chin set as if in stone.~

“THE CONSUMPTION OF ADAM,” Print by Ron Fundingsland

BOOK REVIEWS

Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings by Melissa Studdard with Christopher Theofanidis (composer) and Elisa Vendramin (contributor)
St. Julian Press, Poetry, 2020
Paper, 80 pages, $20

Fluttering Communion, a Review by Keagan Wheat

In *Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings,* Melissa Studdard compels readers to feel the "breaking of flesh / into astonishment" by integrating different art pieces, a range of images, and cyclical turns of phrases (2). As the preface co-written with Christopher Theofanidis states, the chapbook sparks a "realization of harmony and purpose."

Studdard accomplishes an encompassing wholeness by incorporating other art pieces; using Attar's quotations and Theofanidis's sheet music, the chapbook enacts the sprawling connectedness it champions. This chapbook stands alone beautifully, but excels when accompanied by Theofandis's musical compositions. As stated in the preface, the music executes "the flocking movement of birds," which amplifies the Studdar's use of bird imagery and the syntactical flocking movements. Studdard accomplishes the "unity of movement" in Theofandis's musical composition both by following Attar's narrative and by recreating the feeling of musical rests in language (Studdard and Theofanidis, 2020). Studdard flits through the intensity of "find[ing] no God" and an admission of "*hav[ing] no reason*" to the joy of "an arch of wing lift[ing] sun-up towards light" (7). This easy movement through emotional turmoil and elation recreates the descent of a musical rest with the quick lift of the strings returning to carry the piece forward.

The chapbook returns to birds repeatedly, which provides a center for the reader. Mimicking the bird motif, Studdard keeps a quick, jumpy pace moving from large and small images. The hummingbird-like motion bounces around images ranging from a "glowing jellyfish" to "a schoolhouse/ of jewels" (2, 19). The span of images expands the world allowing the interconnectedness of the world to shine.

Fixating on a phrase becomes both self-involved and outward-facing to enable the "annihilation of the self in order to attain complete communion with the divine," which stands as the culmination of Attar's allegory, one finds divinity in the collective (Studdard and Theofanidis, 2020). The final meaning of a phrase is molded throughout a poem. Studdard often repeats phrases for additions or alternative definitions. For instance, she moves from a bird's "body" to "the body of time" within the span of a line (2). Her persistence in pushing phrases syntactically exemplifies the concept of parts making a whole.

This collection keeps its promise to "transcend our differences to find our common humanity" (Studdard and Theofanidis, 2020). More than that, the chapbook reminds me of the glimmers of joy still available, from small, beautiful imagery echoing through a day to artistic collaboration growing the feeling of communion.

FLOATERS by Martín Espada
Norton, 2021
Hardcover, 75 pages, $26.95

A Review by Alice Sanford

Espada's title is found in the book's second poem, "Floaters." Here, and throughout this collection, the nature of evil is clear. Evil denies and attempts to strip away individual humanity. In "Floaters," an anonymous post to a Border Patrol's Facebook Group avers that a picture of the drowned corpses of a twenty-five year old father and his twenty-three month old daughter could be "another edited photo," the word "another" suggesting this father like "crisis actors we see at one school shooting after another" . . . "will breathe, sit up, speak . . . and shake hands with the photographer."

We see evil portrayed again and again. "Ode to the Soccer Ball Sailing Over a Barbed Wire Fence" shows us "three thousand adolescent migrants incarcerated in camp" at Tornillo, a camp Robert Moore describes as "the symbol of what may be the largest U.S. mass detention of children not charged with crimes since the World War II internment of Japanese-Americans." On June 16, 2015, Donald Trump insisted, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best . . . . They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." On August 18, 2015, Scott and Steve Leader, drunk and believing Trump was right, saw "a Mexican in a sleeping bag outside JFK station; "called him a *wetback* and emptied their bladders" in his face, hair, and mouth; beat and kicked him, crushing "the cartilage / in his nose like a can drained of beer." "Not For Him the Fiery Lake of the False Prophet."

The casual acceptance of racism in the United States (i.e., the crowd and Lightning Rod Salka in"Boxer Wears America 1st Shorts in Bout With Mexican, Finishes Second"; both Chuck Stuart and the taxi driver in "Jumping Off the Mystic Tobin Bridge"; the girl with long blonde hair in "Asking Questions of the Moon"; Donald DeBlasio in "Standing on the Bridge at Dolceacqua") and by FEMA's inadequate response in Puerto Rico after 2017's Hurricane Maria in "Letter to My Father," police in "Jumping Off the Mystic Tobin Bridge," Border Patrol members in "Floaters," and airport agents in "Mazen Sleeps With His Foot on the Floor") cause permanent trauma. This leads Mazen Naous, a survivor of civil war in Lebanon, to continue to sleep "with his foot on the floor" and Espada to promise Paul Mariani, "We will win, though we know we cannot win."("Be There When They Swarm Me,") This is an important and paradoxical promise. How can good triumph over evil? How can any mortal human win in a world where evil is personally experienced and historically documented, both in the present and in the past?

In *Floater*s, Espada answers questions of good and evil implicitly and explicitly. Evil brings its own rewards. In "The Assassination of the Landlord's Purple Vintage 1976

Monte Carlo", a venal landlord's prize possession is destroyed by a moose and the arrows of near-sighted hunters. "After midnight, at the hour of the execution" of the almost certainly innocent Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Warden Hendry, "his hand shaking as if shocked," "cannot eat no matter how hunger feeds on him."("I Now Pronounce You Dead,"). His crimes revealed, Chuck Stuart jumps to his death in the Mystic River.(4) Espada calls on whatever saint guards the gates of Heaven to exclude and kick down to the Mexican side of the Río Grande those Border Patrol agents who, in anonymous posts about the tragically drowned Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his baby daughter Angie Valeria Martínez Ávalos, called the dead "floaters" and implied that their photo was a faked publicity stunt. The Hell conjured for Donald Trump ("Not for Him the Fiery Lake of the False Prophet) is not a typical Biblical Hell, nor even the Hell on earth made by Trump's followers:

> For him, Hell is a country where the man in a hard hat
> paving the road to JFK station sees Guillermo and dials 911;
> Hell is a country where EMTs kneel to wrap a blanket around
> the shivering shoulders of Guillermo and wipe his face clean;
> Hell is a country where the nurse at the emergency room
> hangs a morphine drip for Guillermo, so he can go back to sleep.
> Two thousand miles away, someone leaves a trail of water bottles
> in the desert for the border crossing of the next Guillermo. (12)

Good overcomes evil by rising above it, by recognizing each individual's human dignity. Good triumphs by paying attention to the small details of individual lives: Jack Agüeros, who "stacked his apartment with dictionaries in three languages ("Flan,"); Papo, who "stole a car so he wouldn't be late for school"("I Would Steal a Car for You,"); Guillermo Rodríguez, "immigrant with papers, crop-picker in the fields, trader of bottles/ and cans collected in his cart" ("Not For Him the Fiery Lake of the False Prophet,"); Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez, who "slapped dough/ for pizza with oven-blistered fingers" ("Floaters,"); and so many more. Names matter . . . not just the names of the dead but the names of the living, especially those locked away. In "Ode to the Soccer Ball Sailing Over a Barbed-Wire Fence," three thousand teenage migrants at Tornillo are given three thousand soccer balls for Christmas. The children are incarcerated, but the soccer balls, a name and number scrawled on each face, can be kicked free, "high over the chain-link and barbed-wire fence."

Floaters is a book divided into four parts: I) Jumping Off the Mystic Tobin Bridge; II) Asking Questions of the Moon; III) Love Song of the Kraken, and IV) Morir Soñando. Espada uses documented history in parts I and IV (seven poems each); in parts II and III his focus is more on personal history, giving the book, as a whole, the chiastic structure ABBA, where the personal is contained by the historical.

The two historical sections framing the personal differ significantly. Every poem in I) Jumping Off the Mystic Tobin Bridge shows, often with direct quotations, a denial of someone's human value, a denial which Espada clearly fingers as evil. In IV) Morir

Soñando (To Die Dreaming), each poem, without denying the existence of evil, centers on an inspirational person, known to Espada from history or from his own life. II)" Asking Questions of the Moon" and III) "The Love Song of the Kraken" are packed with stories of Espada's family and life, past and present.

Asking Questions of the Moon opens with "The Story of How We Came to America" and continues with stories about Espada's parents, neighborhood, and childhood experiences. In the poem "Asking Questions of the Moon," Espada endures the physical pain of a moon-like baseball tearing through his glove's webbing and smacking him in the eye while he's thinking about "the girl with long blonde hair" . . . "who sat with me / when no one else would, who talked to me when no one else would,/ who laughed at my jokes when no one else would" until she learned his ethnic background and "never spoke to (him) again."

"Standing on the Bridge at Dolceacqua" opens with a tooth that breaks when Espada is forty years old, bringing high school memories reminiscent of *West Side Story*'s Sharks and Jets: of Donald DeBlasio, who punched Espada in the mouth because he was Puerto Rican; of the school's "football deity who could bench press 300 pounds and slammed/ (Espada) into a locker whenever he saw (him)." Through high school, Espada seems to have had no positive associations with Italians. Yet the final stanza of this poem finds Espada, age sixty, in Liguria, Italy, standing on the bridge at Dolceacqua with the woman he loves, a woman descended from Italian immigrants, and "no longer remember(ing) the curses in the poetry/ of Shakespeare and Donald DeBlasio." She takes his hand and leads him across the bridge to the other side of the river. (28-29) In this poem, love redeems the pain of the past.

"Standing on the Bridge at Dolceacqua" is placed at the center of the collection. It is not only the heart of this book but one of three bridge poems. The other two are the titular programs for the first and fourth sections: "Jumping Off the Mystic Tobin Bridge" and "Morir Soñando." Bridges are connectors. Through them, Espada shows how human connections can blossom and heal.

The Mystic Tobin Bridge is where Espada, on his way home from representing the evicted in Chelsea District Court, finds himself stuck in a traffic jam with a racist taxi driver. This Mystic Tobin Bridge is the place where Chuck Stuart, having murdered his pregnant wife and blamed the murder on a nonexistent "Black carjacker" (successfully, until exposed by his accomplice-brother's confession), jumped to his death. The taxi driver, his prejudice against "Josés" countered again and again by Espada, finally "shouted: *What do you want me to do? Get out of this cab and jump off the bridge*?" Espada "almost nodded yes." As a migrant's son and a lawyer defending the impoverished, he felt that the "driver, the cops, the landlords, the judges / all wanted us to jump off the Mystic Tobin Bridge." Instead he ends the poem with this reminder:

Last night, still more landed here, clothing stuffed in garbage bags, to flee the god

of hurricanes flinging their houses into the sky or the god of hunger slipping
his knife between the ribs, not a dark tide like the tide of the Mystic River, but
builders of bridges. You can walk across the bridges they build. Or you can jump.

The builders of bridges are celebrated in IV) Morir Soñando, none more than Luis Garden Acosta in the poem "Morir Soñando," whose dreams envision and transform an abandoned church on South 4th Street to *El Puente*, the Bridge. El Puente becomes a bridge that supports life skills --- karate, English classes, environmental activism, health clinics, etc. --- and provides community for recent immigrants. Other important models from Espada's life include Paul Mariani ("Be There When They Swarm Me"), Donald Hall ("The Bard Shakes the Snow from the Trees"), Jack Agüeros ("Flan"), and his own father ("Letter to My Father"). Two poems in this section depict historical figures whose work and deeds Espada admires. Arturo Giovannitti, Italian poet, socialist, and labor activist who organized the 1912 Bread and Roses strike at the mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts, is celebrated in "Remake of Me the Sickle for Thy Grain." Doctor Ramón Emeterio Betances, 1827-1898, famed for fighting a cholera epidemic and for organizing abolitionists and a revolution against slavery and Spanish rule in Puerto Rico, is celebrated in "The Five Horses of Doctor Ramón Emeterio Betances." While primarily narrative, these poems strike an elegiac note.

Crossing the bridges that separate people from one another is always a choice. This choice dominates the book, as the four-partite structure of *Floaters* moves from the political to the personal to the heroic. In the process, Espada affirms the power of love, the consequences of its lack, and how it may be established and maintained. These sections and their movement from man's denial of common humanity to what may constitute a kind of redemption are marked by three "bridge" poems: "Jumping Off the Mystic Tobin Bridge," which opens section I; "Standing on the Bridge at Dolceaequa," the last poem in section II; and "Morir Soñando," the fifth of seven poems in section four. The entire book, like Espada's life, is cradled by the influence of his father, Frank Espada, creator of "The Puerto Rican Diaspora Documentary Project," which combined his documentary photographs and an oral history of the migration. The last poem in this book is addressed to his father, now a box of ashes. The cover photograph, *Angel Luis Jiménez, Evicted Mushroom Worker, Kennett Square, PA, 1981,* is his father's work. While their media differ, both Frank and Martín Espada "speak for others . . . through (their) art." May more people of this world listen.

Remote: Finding Home in the Bitterroots by DJ Lee
Oregon State University Press, Nonfiction, 2020
Paper, 200 pages, $19.95

Review By Terry Lawhead

A Zen master from the 12th century, Dogen Zenji, wrote in the "Mountains and Rivers Sutra":

> Therefore, investigate mountains thoroughly. When you investigate mountains thoroughly, this is the work of the mountains.
> Such mountains and rivers of themselves become sages and teachers.

Author DJ Lee is an investigator of mountains. Lee's family has a long history of participating in a diverse community in the million-acre Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in the northern Rocky Mountains, part of the largest roadless area in the contiguous US, but events took place that she could not understand until she found a long hidden-away box of her grandmother's diaries. Those cryptic writings revealed a labyrinth of family mysteries, forcing Lee to hike into that past and wilderness.

In her search the author discovers that bewildering pieces of the history lost in the passage of time are as evocative as relics found in dusty attics and cupboards of old log cabins. She also learns that what is never fully understood can be bridged with determination, love, and forgiveness.

Throughout the book Lee deepens a tangled identity with her grandparents and their friends over a century of living in the wilderness. Some of them are still alive and willing to talk about the past, and some are known only through the journals and news clippings, revealing anecdotes and connections that raise more questions.

Lee ponders her own engaging experiences in the mountains, hiking alone on rugged trails, swimming with migrating salmon, using tools built by her grandparents, and following wolverine tracks in snow from a small plane, the pilot seeking a poacher—yes, she learns, tracks of wild animals can suddenly vanish just like events in the past.

She also trusts her intuition to find other necessary tools for divining the land and twice along the way participates in constellation workshops, a proven group process drawing on the science of epigenetics that helps people understand how events beyond their own life experiences define their story and heal trauma.

True stories of authentic lives rarely present perfect clarity of the shifting dynamics of family and friends not to mention the tremendous pull of places. The book also reveals how the present is always ready to change one's appreciation of the past. When a beloved friend and longtime wilderness ranger, an advocate of the Selway-Bitterroot and link to Lee's parents, disappears in the mountains, the inexplicable loss for Lee is another haunting reminder of the fragility and risk in our mortal lives. She joins the search effort but the friend is never found.

Lee's investigation of mountains is told through delicately balanced chapters of interviews and research, adventure and reflection, that sturdily support and guide one another toward arrival like old stone cairns placed along the trail. Those markers

welcome the reader to live in the question, not the answer. Lee finds closure in embracing the comforting cycles of nature.

Play Me A Revolution, Lindsey Royce.
Press 53, Poetry, 2019
Paper, 63 pages, $14.95

A Review by Allison Joseph

Lindsey Royce's *Play Me A Revolution* is an unabashedly emotional book. In an age where our lives are full of sarcasm and snark, irony and contempt, Royce brings us poems that speak of and to the heart with no hesitations. This is a book that isn't afraid to foreground those big emotions: love, desire, beauty, and fear. This poet practices tenderness, poetic fashion be damned.

The book opens with poems that explore the body's vulnerabilities. Sex is part of this poet's landscape from the book's opening lines:

> The moment he withdraws from my body,
> spent, the blush that follows
> slants across tossed, white sheets.
> from "Things I Didn't Know I Loved"

The speaker of these poems isn't shy about her desires, either. Hers is a landscape of kisses, juices, skin, birds, fields, and sunshine:

> I want to walk naked into the fields,
> skin sequined as hummingbirds
> that sip from purple lilacs, vibrant
> as fragrant air.
> from "An Offering to What's News"

If this were a book that solely and straightforwardly celebrated the sensual life, that would be an accomplishment in and of itself. But *Play Me A Revolution* also sees political and social engagement as poetic material. The book's second section takes on the tricky territory of social injustice in language less sensual than the book's first section, diction meant to connect the reader directly with issues of racial injustice and poverty. Here, the poet's frank truth-telling risks alienating readers seeking discursive refinement in poetry; Royce isn't interested in telling it slant when it comes to gun deaths, caged children, or gender violence. The strongest poem in this section is "An Incited Legacy," an elegy for Heather Heyer, the young woman protester killed by white supremacist violence in Charlottesville in 2017:

> Yes, her name was Heather, for Heather—

You laughed because she was too slow
to clear your car's trajectory,

as if murder were a game of dodgeball—
and in your mug shot, dumb cruelty in those eyes,

eyes willing to pay the price of prison—for a killing
you found noble, you who would mimic your king.

The book's third section brings back the theme of unflagging sensuality, but in this part of the book, nature's the focus. The poems in this section of *Play Me A Revolution* inhabit rivers and mountains with a guide's sure vision. There's a deep knowledge of and respect for this wilderness from this poet, as evidenced in the poem "Love Song for the Wild": "Praise stone-speckled dirt roads, trails to follow nowhere, geese walking/ circles around a dead brother. Praise."

Praise, indeed. *Play Me A Revolution* is all about praise, even as it seeks justice. It's a book to be shared with people who claim they don't like poetry—its accessible beauty makes it feel like a gift. Lindsey Royce is a poet of heart and grit, a poet unafraid to

…praise the difficult, the common?
Pile of split wood, the grass that cradles it,

cut flowers that die too soon,
fruits that sweeten our mouths and nourish,

dogs plunging into the river to retrieve sticks,
shaking prismatic arcs of water,

the child toddling on a blanket,
her mother's hands open to catch her fall.

from "Dare Praise"

The State She's In by Lesley Wheeler
Tinderbox Editions, Poetry, 2020,
Paper, 106 pages, $18

A Dazzle That Is Hers, a Review by Cynthia Hogue

Lesley Wheeler's fifth collection of poetry, *The State She's In* (Tinderbox Press, 2020), is redolent with brilliantly acerbic poems. She is a mordant chronicler of the state of the Union these last four tumultuous years, from the Women's March protesting the suspect results of the 2016 election to the country's first stunned steps toward a national reckoning with the legacies of white supremacy and slavery. Wheeler is an accomplished and inventive formalist poet. An earlier work, a fantasy novel entitled *The*

Receptionist, is in flawless terza rima. *The State She's In* transforms profound moral outrage at systemic sexism and racism into richly innovative and formally adventurous poetry. This is a major collection.

Wheeler is bracingly direct about her location—Virginia, also Monacan land—and her subject position—"*white, mother,*" as she identifies herself in "Paid Advertisement." She is blunt about what she can no longer abide: men who explain "Clinton's failure" ("Imperfect Ten"); "mishear" her Title IX complaint ("Fifty-Fifty"); tell her she was hired for her looks, and prod her arm "with a hypodermic finger" under the table ("Journey"). In response, as she writes, wryly, "I was rude" ("Dear Anne Spencer"), and in the volume's penultimate poem, "New Year Colonoscopy," she empties herself "of last year's toxic shit." Meanwhile, she'll protest such an anti-immigrant candidate winning the presidential election by writing a ghazal, a form the poem identifies as "immigrant": "Arab, Persian, Hindi, Pashto, Hebrew" ("Imperfect Ten"). She'll pen a spell or two to banish sexist men ("All-Purpose Spell for Banishment"), moreover, and craft a "counter-screed" to neutralize racism ("Boil-in-a-Bag").

This collection does its share to help uncover the racialized understory of dominant history in the U.S. For a number of the astute poems specific to Wheeler's institution, for example, she dug into the archives of Washington and Lee University. In doing so, she discovered that a donor's bequest of slaves, who were sold to a Mississippi plantation, paid for the lovely "red brick buildings" and tree-lined paths of the present-day campus. She "riffles through" the bills of sale of the slaves, their names the only evidence that they lived. One, the eponymous John Robinson, apostrophizes (and cautions), "*Ma'am, you do not know the first thing*" ("John Robinson's List, 1826," emphasis Wheeler's). I usually find problematic such evocations of voice—specifically, as here, of someone whose life is so inaccessible to poet—but the italicized speech interrupting the documentary passages in this poem are candid and moving. In the end, surely because of her fierce ethos in such poems, I came to feel that Wheeler took steps to earn that imaginary access via the available poetic trope of apostrophe.

Wheeler is equally effective in detailing such major life passages as empty nest, menopause, and eldercare. Her personal lyrics crackle with contrasts she puts into play and deftly balances. Graphic descriptions of the "red excess" of perimenopause become revelatory trope for a female poet's embodied relationship to her art: "the song carries / on, uncorkable pour of me, shameless" ("Perimenopause"). Nor does Wheeler shy away from what Alice Fulton has called the "inconvenient truths," for instance the bitterness experienced by women whose lifelong ambitions have been frustrated. "I need to learn / how to endure my own / bitterness," the speaker of "Black Walnut Tree" tells herself, even as she dryly observes that the tree is "strong and straight" because its poisons cleared the obstacles to reaching water.

Wheeler has of late had an interest in exploring the incantatory power of poetry, its connection to spells as well as its roots in song. Throughout the volume are gem-like poems of conjure and spell, placed before or following more personal and political poems. Such juxtapositions create tension and dialogue among poems with varying concerns. A striking example are the first two poems, which establish this method. The opening poem, "State Song," is a performative invocation to heed a powerful "call." Here's the poem's last stanza:

. . . . . Because I call you, power

thrums the ground. Now is the hour,
gilded, grand. I call this dazzle ours.
("State Song")

We don't know who or what is calling or being called, but we feel how the lines concentrate the occasion for the "call" in terza rima. These lines of measured folk meter gather the power of a conjuring presence who claims this "dazzle." But in whose name?

The next poem makes clear who owns this dazzle. Taking as its subject the historic Women's March in January, 2017, the voice shifts to chronicle, planting its poetic feet on solid ground. The driving force of "In the Pink" is the outrage that catalyzed women from all over the country to convene in protest and march in D.C., but Wheeler's portrait is rooted in the lived experience of marching in winter. As much as the setting is full of high political drama and politics, the poem unfolds with twists at once comic and hopeful. The speaker's hip hurts. It's freezing. The city is full of strong women with red noses in pink hats with "pointy ears":

. . . . . .Countless cartoon uteri
lofted into polity: she, she, she.
Meanwhile, men orate.
This continues to be America.

The speaker has brought her daughter, however, and as dispirited as the mother might feel, nothing is lost on her daughter, whose "rebel yell" is "*Gender isn't real!*" As she quips to her mother, "*you can write the poem /. . .for my swearing-in."* (emphasis Wheeler's).

In this richly varied and deeply felt collection, Wheeler is documenting America's present, for the future. She can take her place among the white feminist poets writing in order to protest and counter the ugly vestiges of misogyny and racism still evident today, and to participate in productive dialogue with such vital, multicultural movements as Black Lives Matter. This is a major collection by a prodigiously talented poet.

“DIARY,” Print by Ron Fundingsland

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

Martin Arnold has published poetry in many fine journals, including *Crazyhorse*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, and *Best New Poets 2012*. His first chapbook, *A Million Distant Glittering Catastrophes*, won the 2009-2010 Pavement Saw Chapbook Contest. *Earthquake Owner's Manual* won the 2013 Unicorn Press First Book Award. His most recent chapbook, *Promiscuous Beauty*, was published in November 2019 by Finishing Line Press.

Joseph Charles Belshe is a rare bird indeed. This past year marked 100 years of his life on this planet. An extraordinary family man, physician, and athlete, he wove a life filled with accomplishments. That list is for another day. Lucky for us he Is also a prolific poet and writer. He has no books…yet! *Cutthroat* is proud to feature a small sampling of his work.

Kimberly Blaeser, past Wisconsin Poet Laureate and founding director of Indigenous Nations Poets, is the author of five poetry collections including *Copper Yearning*, *Apprenticed to Justice*, and the bi-lingual *Résister en dansant/Ikwe-niimi: Dancing Resistance.* Blaeser edited *Traces in Blood, Bone, and Stone: Contemporary Ojibwe Poetry* and authored the monograph *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition.* An Anishinaabe activist and environmentalist from White Earth Reservation, she is a Professor at UW–Milwaukee and MFA faculty for the Institute of American Indian Arts. Her photographs, picto-poems, and ekphrastic pieces have appeared in exhibits such as "Ancient Light" and "Visualizing Sovereignty."

Elizabeth Brown's work has appeared in publications as diverse as *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Women's World* and *The Daily Beast.* A short story is upcoming in *Image Journal*. She has taught at the University of Arizona's Eller School of Business and worked as a pastoral counselor. She currently writes poetry and fiction from her home in Tucson, Arizona.

Manuel Calvillo de la Garza is a Mexican writer and former engineer whose work has received support from the Fiction Collective 2 and from Chapman University, where he obtained his MFA from and where he taught multilingual composition. His writing is appears in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*. He is at work finishing his first novel, *School of Artistas Inmigrantes*.

Tina Carlson is a NM poet and psychiatric nurse practitioner. Her work appears in *Psaltery and Lyre, Cutthroat, A Journal of the Arts, Mom Egg Review*, *Hunger Mountain, and SWWIM*, among others. Her first book, *Ground, Wind, This Body* (University of New Mexico Press, 2017) explores the destructive effects of war on a family when the embattled veteran receives no help after the battle field, as well as themes of nature as redemption, international adoption, and dreams. Her second book, *We Are Meant To*

Carry Water (3: A Taos Press) a collaborative book with 2 other NM poets in response to the US 2016 election, won 1st Place in the 2021 AZ/NM Book Award for Poetry Anthology.

Natasha Carrizosa is a poet and writer. Her work is deeply rooted in her childhood and life experiences. Raised as the daughter of a fierce African-American mother and Mexican father, her writing reflects the dichotomy of these two rich cultures. She is author of *crown*, *mexiafricana*, and *heavy light.* Her work has been published in *¡Manteca!* - an anthology of Afro-Latino poets, *CONTRA: Texas Poets Speak Out, raising mothers*, and *R2: The Rice Review* (Rice University.)

Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA student, **Sheri Sherman Cohen** was once a copywriter and freelance journalist as well as a horse trader and appraiser for equine show jumping. Having lived in every region of the United States, she now resides in Southern California. Prior to beginning her MFA, she attended the summer Iowa Writers' Workshop taught by James Galvin. Sheri is an instructor in Ikebana and has exhibited her contemporary arrangements in a New York City gallery. Her landscape photography and poetry also show her affinity for nature.

Susan Cohen is the author of two chapbooks and two full-length collections: *Throat Singing* (Cherry Grove Collections; 2012) and *A Different Wakeful Animal* (David Martinson—Meadowhawk Prize; Red Dragonfly Press; 2016). Her poems recently appeared in the *Atlanta Review 25th Anniversary Anthology, Los Angeles Review, PANK, Prairie Schooner, Southern Humanities Review, the Southern Review, Tar River Poetry, Valparaiso Poetry Review,* and won the 2020 *Terrain.org* prize in poetry. A former journalist, she earned an MFA from Pacific University and lives in Northern California where she prays for rain.

Timothy DeLizza lives in Baltimore, where he's an energy attorney for the government. His novella 'Jerry (from Accounting)' was published by Amazon.com's Day One imprint. His prose was recently published in *Another Chicago Magazine*, *New South*, and *The Potomac Review.* DeLizza strongly encourages you to adopt rats. The two most important things for beginners to know are (1) rats are highly social and so you must adopt at least two (preferably more) rats so that they are not lonely and (2) you should only adopt from animal recues or reputable breeders, and never chain stores. Adopting from a rescue or breeder is more ethical and helps ensure that your rats were well-socialized as pups. Harry, Vinnie and Gordo were adopted from Small Angels Rescue in Frederick County, MD. Small Angels Rat Care Sheet will help you navigate the rest of the early adoption process. They sure could use your help in the form of donations or volunteering. http://www.smallangelsrescue.org

Angela Dribben's collection, *Everygirl*, a finalist for the 2020 Dogfish Head Prize, was released in May 2021. Her poetry, essays, mixed media, and reviews can be found or are forthcoming in *Orion, The Night Heron Barks, Cave Wall, EcoTheo, Crab Creek Review, Crack the Spine*, and others.

Andrea England is co-editor of the anthology, *Scientists & Poets #Resist*, and the author of *Other Geographies* and *Inventory of a Field*. Her poems have most recently appeared in *The Potomac Review*, *SWWIM*, *SoFloPoJo*, *Indolent Books*, "Poems in the Afterglow," and *Writers Resist*. She works and writes between Kalamazoo and Manistee, Michigan.

Stephen Erickson is an author, environmental and animal activist, screenwriter and feature filmmaker. His newest book, *REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE - What it is, How it Will Revitalize Rural Communities Across America & Why it is Essential for Human Survival on Earth*, will be published this Spring. His website/blog is thegreathealing.org You can follow him on twitter at @thegreathealing Stephen lives in Los Angeles and has 3 children.

Martín Espada has published more than twenty books as a poet, essayist, editor and translator. His latest collection of poems is called *Floaters* (Norton, 2021). He is also the editor of *What Saves Us: Poems of Empathy and Outrage in the Age of Trump* (Northwestern, 2019). He has received the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Shelley Memorial Award, an Academy of American Poets Fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Espada is a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Ann Fisher-Wirth's sixth book of poems is *The Bones of Winter Birds* (Terrapin Books, 2019). *Mississippi*, her fifth, is a poetry/photography collaboration with the photographer Maude Schuyler Clay (Wings Press, 2018). With Laura-Gray Street, Ann coedited *The Ecopoetry Anthology* (Trinity UP, third edition 2020). She is a senior fellow of The Black Earth Institute; has had residencies at The Mesa Refuge, Djerassi, Hedgebrook, and CAMAC, France; and has received numerous awards for her work. Ann was 2017 Poet in Residence at Randolph College and has senior Fulbrights to Switzerland and Sweden. She is a Professor of English and directs the Environmental Studies program at the University of Mississippi.

Jennifer Elise Foerster is the author of two books of poetry, *Leaving Tulsa* (2013) and *Bright Raft in the Afterweather* (2018). An alumna of the Institute of American Indian Arts, she received her PhD at the University of Denver and her MFA at Vermont College of the Fine Arts. She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship and was a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry. Jennifer currently teaches at the Rainier Writing Workshop and is the Literary Assistant to the U.S. Poet Laureate, Joy Harjo. A member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, she lives in San Francisco.

Carolyn Forché's most recent book of poems, *In the Lateness of the World* (Penguin Press, 2020) was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Her prose book, *What You Have Heard Is True: A Memoir of Witness and Resistance* (Penguin Press, 2019) was a finalist for the National Book Award. She is the author of four previous poetry books, and editor of *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness* (W.W. Norton & Co.) and, with Duncan Wu, *Poetry of Witness: The Tradition in English, 1500-2001* (W.W. Norton & Co.). She has received many awards, including the Windham Campbell Prize, the Lannan Award in Poetry, the Academy of American Poets Fellowship in Poetry and the

Edita and Ira Morris Hiroshima Foundation Award for Peace and Culture. She teaches at Georgetown University.

Artist **Ron Fundingsland** has exhibited nationally and internationally and is the recipient of many awards including the Ture Bengtz Memorial Prize, awarded by juror Jim Dine at the Boston Printmakers 2011 North American Print Biennial. His prints are included in the permanent collections of several museums including the Denver Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art – Kansas City, among others. www.ronfundingsland.com

Albert Garcia is the author of three books of poems, *Rainshadow* (Copper Beech Press), *Skunk Talk* (Bear Star Press), and *A Meal Like That* (Brick Road Poetry Press) as well as a textbook called *Digging In: Literature for Developing Writers* (Prentice Hall). His poems have appeared in journals such as *Prairie Schooner, Willow Springs, Southern Poetry Review,* and *North American Review.* He serves as Vice President of Instruction at Sacramento City College.

Jerry Gates lives and makes art near Traverse City, Michigan. He's had numerous one person shows including at Central Michigan University, Delta College and many galleries. He is represented by the Twisted fish Gallery Elk Rapids ,Michigan and Old Mission Bella Galleria, Old Mission, Michigan and The Dennos Art Museum, Traverse City, Michigan. Jerry's fine oil pastels and paintings are featured in numerous public and private collections throughout the United States. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree from Central Michigan University, he was drafted into the Army and spent 18 months in the Arctic region of Fairbanks Alaska, where the Aurora Borealis, extreme light changes and ice fog creating strange affected his art throughout my life. He taught in public schools as well as at the college & university levels. "Art has saved my life," Jerry says, "I believe this."

Cynthia Good is an award-winning author, journalist and TV news anchor. She has written six books including *Vaccinating Your Child*, which won the Georgia Author of the Year award. She has launched two magazines, *Atlanta Woman* and *PINK* magazine for women in business. Cynthia's new chapbook from Finishing Line Press is forthcoming in 2021. Her poems appear in such journals as *Awakenings, Bridgewater International Poetry Festival, Free State Review, Full Bleed, Main Street Rag, Maudlin House Review, Outrider Press*, *OyeDrum Magazine, Persimmon Tree, Pink Panther Magazine, The Ravens Perch, Reed Magazine, and Tall Grass,* among others.

Harry Gordon is a former newspaper reporter and teacher living in Long Beach, CA. His work has appeared in the *Concho River Review, Worcester Review* and *Southwestern American Literature*.

Hedy Habra has authored three poetry collections. *The Taste of the Earth* (Press 53 2019) won the Silver Nautilus Book Award, Honorable Mention for the Eric Hoffer Book Award, and Finalist for the Best Book Award. *Tea in Heliopolis* won Best Book Award and *Under Brushstrokes* was finalist for the Best Book Award and the International Book

Award. Her story collection, *Flying Carpets*, won the Arab American Book Award's Honorable Mention and was finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. Her book of criticism, *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa*, examines the visual aspects of the Peruvian Nobel Prize Winner narrative. Recipient of the Nazim Hikmet Award, her multilingual work appears widely. https://www.hedyhabra.com/

Richard Hague is a Northern Appalachian from Steubenville, Ohio, and a long-time resident of Cincinnati. He is author or editor of 20 volumes, the most recent being *Riparian: Poetry, Short Prose, and Photographs Inspired by the Ohio River* (Dos Madres Press, 2019) and the essay collection *Earnest Occupations: Teaching, Writing, Gardening, and Other Local Work* (Bottom Dog Press, 2018), listed as "Recommended" by the *US Review of Books*. He continues as Artist-in-Residence at Thomas More University in northern Kentucky.

Joy Harjo is 23rd United States Poet Laureate. She is serving an unprecedented third term. Author of several books of poems, including *She Had Some Horses, The Woman Who Fell From the Sky, The Map to the Other World* and her most recent, *An American Sunrise*, WW Norton, 2019. Her memoir, *Crazy Brave*, won a PEN USA Award for Nonfiction. Her second memoir, *Warrior Poet*, is due out of WW Norton in September 2021. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Ruth Lily Award, The Jackson Prize and a Guggenheim Fellowship. An accomplished Saxaphone player, Harjo's latest music CD, *I Pray for my Enemies*, Mekko Productions,was released in 2020. A member of the Muskogee Creek Nation, Joy is a Tulsa Artist Fellow and lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma with her husband.

LeAnne Howe is an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Born and raised in Oklahoma she is the Eidson Distinguished Professor of American Literature in English at the University of Georgia. Howe is the author of fiction, poetry, and scholarship. Her latest documentary film, *Searching for Sequoyah*, will air in November 2021 on PBS affiliated stations across the U.S. Her latest 2020 books include *Famine Pots: The Choctaw Irish Gift Exchange 1847-Present*, Michigan State University Press, co-edited with Irish scholar, Padraig Kirwan; and, *When The Light of The World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through*: *A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry*, edited by U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, Howe, and Jennifer Elise Foerster.

Gregg Hurwtiz is the *New York Times* #1 internationally bestselling author of 22 thrillers including the ORPHAN X series. His novels have won numerous literary awards and have been published in 33 languages. Additionally, he's written screenplays and television scripts for many of the major studios and networks, comics for DC and Marvel, and political and culture pieces for The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, The Bulwark and others. Gregg lives with his three Rhodesian ridgebacks in Los Angeles.

Daria Ilgova is a poet and essayist from Russia, author of three poetry books, including "Origami" (Moscow, 2020). Her works have also been published in following magazines:

“Deti Ra”, “Zinziver”, “Slovo/Word” etc. At the moment she is working on her PhD dissertation about visual poetry.

Poet & playwright, **Maria James-Thiaw**, has published 3 books, including *Rising Waters* (2003) and *Talking 'White'* (2013.) Her poems appear in anthologies and literary journals such as *One Trick Pony Review* and *Black Lives Have Always Mattered.* In 2018 her choreopoem, *Reclaiming My Time: An American Griot Project* won the Art of Protest Poetry Prize from Penn State's Center for American Literary Studies (CALS). That year she founded Reclaim Artist Collective to bring affordable, anti-racist arts programs to marginalized communities. As Program Coordinator of Creative Writing at the Capital Area School for the Arts, she teaches the next generation to let their voices be heard.

Teresa H. Janssen has taught for over twenty years, most recently in a public high school. She is a recipient of the Norman Mailer/NCTE creative nonfiction prize and a notable American essay designee. Her prose and poetry have appeared in *Zyzzyva, Cathexis Northwest, Los Angeles Review, Chautauqua, Ruminate* and elsewhere.

All things are connected. That's the premise of what **William J. Joel** does. Each of Mr. Joel's interests informs each other. Mr. Joel has been teaching computer science since 1983 and has been a writer even longer. His works have recently appeared in *Common Ground Review*, *DASH Literary Journal*, *The Blend International*, *Liminality*, and *North Dakota Quarterly.*

Jacqueline Johnson is a multi-disciplined artist creating in both fiber arts, poetry, and fiction writing. Recent exhibitions include: **Yours for Race and Country: Reflections on the Life of Colonel Charles Young** at the National Afro-American Museum. **The Soul of Zora: A Literary Legacy Through Quilts,** The Legacy Museum, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee Institute, AL and **Visioning Human Rights in the New Millennium, exhibition catalog.** She is the author of ***A Woman's Season***, Main Street Rag Press and ***A Gathering of Mother Tongues****,* White Pine Press. She resides in Brooklyn, New York.

Emily Anna King (锡萍芳) is a Wellesley College graduate and MA in Creative Writing candidate at University College Cork in Ireland. Her most recent publications are in *Massachusetts Best Emerging Poets 2019 (Z Publishing), Pamplemousse, Lily Poetry Review, Paragon Press*, and *Otherwise Engaged Journal.* While her work often explores the Chinese American adoptee experience, she is also fascinated in the intersectionality between language and music. Besides writing, she loves spending time with family, playing piano, training in Brazilian jiujitsu, and baking.

E.E. King is a painter, performer, writer, and naturalist - She’ll do anything that won’t pay the bills, especially if it involves animals. Ray Bradbury called her stories, “marvelously inventive, wildly funny and deeply thought-provoking. I cannot recommend them highly enough.” King has won numerous various awards and fellowships for art, writing, and environmental research. She’s been published widely, most recently in *Clarkesworld* and *On Spec*. She's on Tangent's 2019 and 2020 recommended fiction

list. Check out paintings, writing, musings, and books at : www.elizabetheveking.com and amazon.com/author/eeking

Albert Kogel is a Tucson-based artist whose work has been exhibited nationally and internationally . Additional information about Albert's work can be found at albertkogel.com

Diana Kostelecky is a Zuni Pueblo native living in her hometown of Zuni, New Mexico. She is a Shiwi, the Zuni's name for themselves. Diana is a retired elementary reading teacher. She cherishes her family including fur babies. Her passions are reading, writing poems and stories, sometimes in the Shiwi language. Other loves include taking photos during walks, marveling at the wonders of nature and listening to the music of the world. Diana gives a heartfelt thank you for the support of family and friends.

Petra Kuppers is a disability culture activist and a community performance artist. She uses ecosomatics, performance, and speculative writing to engage audiences toward more socially just and enjoyable futures, teaches at the University of Michigan, and is a Black Earth Institute fellow. Her third performance poetry collection, *Gut Botany*, was named one of the top ten US poetry books of 2020 by the New York Public Library. She is the Artistic Director of The Olimpias, a disability culture collective, and co-creates Turtle Disco, a somatic writing studio, in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The two poems shared here are part of a poet's theatre script: Gun Songs.

Helena Lipstadt is a Berlin native and lives in Los Angeles and Blue Hill, Maine. Her poems have been featured in About Place Journal, Trivia, basalt, The Midwest Review and elsewhere. Lipstadt is the author of two chapbooks, Leave Me Signs and If My Heart Were A Desert. Her work has been supported by residencies at WUJS Arts Project, Arad, Israel and Borderland Foundation, Sejny, Poland. Lipstadt, a finalist for Wren Poetry Prize and New Rivers Press 'Many Voices Project', designed and hand-built her house in Blue Hill, Maine.

Linda Zamora Lucero is writing a series of short stories set in San Francisco's Mission District. Published stories include "Take the Money and Run–1968" (Bilingual Review, 2015) and "Balmy Alley Forever" (Santa Clara Review 2016; Yellow Medicine Review, 2016). Linda is the Executive/Artistic Director of Yerba Buena Gardens Festival in SF. Her graphic artwork appeared in "¡Printing the Revolution!" at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in September 2020.

Jesse Tsinajinnie Maloney grew up on the Leeward side of O'ahu and attended the same High School as Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. His work appears in *Turtle Island Quarterly, Peach Velvet Lit Mag, About Place, Cutthroat* and other places. His debut full length work *Health Carefully* was released by Cyberwit press 2019. In 2020 he co-hosted with Orlando White the virtual reading series Midnight Transmission. As a musician, Jesse is producing a collaborative spoken word/instrumental album featuring poets Pamela Uschuk and William Pitt Root to be released spring 2022. Jesse Tsinajinnie Maloney teaches at Dine' College and lives with his wife Julie and cats on

the Navajo Nation. Website: Jesse5-0 Productions https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTDYJSj6NycnUFNBgt2MpCA

Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton is an internationally-known writer, educator, activist, performer, and the first Black Poet Laureate of Houston, Texas. Formerly ranked the #2 Best Female Performance Poet in the World, Her recent poetry collection, Newsworthy, garnered her a Pushcart nomination, was named a finalist for the 2019 Writer's League of Texas Book Award, and received honorable mention for the Summerlee Book Prize. Its German translation, under the title *Berichtenswert*, is set to be released in Fall 2021 by Elif Verlag. She lives and creates in Houston, TX. For more information visit www.LiveLifedeep.com

Melanie Murphy is a graduate of the North Eastern Ohio Master of Fine Arts program at Kent State University. She lives in Calcutta, Ohio with her husband, Jack, and her daughter, Rosie. Her publications include *Cutthroat*, *A Journal of the Arts 19*, Cuyahoga Library's *30 Days of Poetry*, *Bordersenses Literary and Arts Journal*, and *The Chronicles of Eve*, by Paper Swans Press.

Ruby Hansen Murray is an award-winning columnist for the *Osage News.* The Winner of the Montana Nonfiction Prize, awarded fellowships at Ragdale, Hedgebrook, and Fishtrap, her work has won notice in *Under the Sun*, *Peauxdunque Journal* and appears in *Allotment Stories, Moss, High Desert Journal, Exquisite Vessel: Shapes of Native Nonfiction, Native: Voices, Indigenous American Poetry, World Literature Today, CutBank,* and *The Rumpus*. A citizen of the Osage Nation with West Indian roots, she lives in the lower Columbia River estuary. www.rubyhansenmurray.com

Jed Myers is author of *Watching the Perseids* (Sacramento Poetry Center Book Award), *The Marriage of Space and Time*, and four chapbooks, including *Dark's Channels* (*Iron Horse Literary Review* Chapbook Award) and *Love's Test* (winner, Grayson Books Chapbook Contest). Recognitions include *Southern Indiana Review*'s Editors' Award, the *Prime Number Magazine* Award, *The Southeast Review*'s Gearhart Prize, and *The Tishman Review*'s Millay Prize. Poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Rattle, Poetry Northwest*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Greensboro Review* and elsewhere. Myers lives in Seattle and is Poetry Editor for *Bracken.*

66 children is a poem I wish nobody would ever write. The number kept changing - a few children in Gaza died later of injuries sustained from Israeli bombings. Crimes against children are never politics. This is not the first time it happened. ***Naomi Shihab Nye*** *is the current Young People's Poet Laureate (Poetry Foundation) who wishes for protective shields around all young people.*

Olivette Petersen is a poet and writer living in Tennessee. Her work has appeared previously in *Sequoya Review*, *Sink Hollow*, and *Girl Soup*. She currently works as a freelance writer and enjoys spending as much time as possible outdoors while finding ways to observe and connect with the world through language.

Brenda Peterson is the author of over 20 books, including *Duck and Cover* a *New York Times* "Notable Book of the Year." Her memoir, *I Want to Be Left Behind*, was selected as a "Top Ten Best Non-Fiction" book by the *Christian Science Monitor* and an Indie Next "Great Read," by Independent Booksellers. Peterson's latest book is *Wolf Nation,* chosen as a "Best Conservation Book of the Year" by *Forbes* magazine. Her work has appeared on NPR and in *The New York Times, Tikkun*, and *Oprah* magazine. This is an excerpt from her new novel, *Railroad Girl.* www.BrendaPetersonBooks.com

Pamela Portwood is a writer and poet. Art critic for the *Tucson Weekly*, *Arizona Daily Star* and *Artspace: Southwestern Contemporary Arts Quarterly, s*he received a fellowship in art criticism from the National Gallery of Art. Her poetry book *A Bruised Light*, supported by a project award from the Arizona Commission on the Arts, was published by Star Cloud Press. Pamela excelled as a residential interior designer. One of her award-winning designs is featured in *LEEDing the Way – Domestic Architecture for the Future: LEED Certified, Green, Passive & Natural.*

Connie Post was the first Poet Laureate of Livermore, California. Her work appears in *Calyx, American Journal of Poetry, River Styx, Slipstream, Spoon River Poetry Review,* and *Verse Daily*. Her Awards include the Crab Creek Review Poetry, the Liakoura Award, Award and the Caesura Award . Her first book "Floodwater" won the Lyrebird Award. Her second collection (Glass Lyre Press, 2020) "Prime Meridian" was a finalist in the Best book Awards and the International Book Awards. About this book , Juan Herrera says "we need this wisdom book, clear elixir from the source"

David B. Prather's first collection, *We Were Birds*, was published by Main Street Rag Publishing in 2019. His poetry has appeared in many journals, including *Colorado Review, Seneca Review, Prairie Schooner, The American Journal of Poetry, The Literary Review, Poet Lore,* and others. He studied acting at the National Shakespeare Conservatory in New York, and he received his MFA from Warren Wilson College in North Carolina.

Scott Ragland has an MFA in Creative Writing (fiction) from UNC Greensboro. Before taking a writing hiatus, he had several stories published, most notably in *Writers' Forum, Beloit Fiction Journal,* and *The Quarterly*. More recently, his flashes have appeared in *The Conium Review, Newfound, Ambit, The Common* (online), *Fiction International, Cherry Tree, CutBank* (online), *the minnesota review*, and *Glassworks*, among others. He lives in Carrboro, N.C., with his wife Ann, two dogs, and a cat.

Jenny Robertson lives in Louisiana. She holds an MFA in Fiction from Pacific University. The first chapter of her novella set in 1920s Iron Range Minnesota placed second in *Cutthroat's* Rick DeMarinis short story contest, judged by Stuart Dybek. She also received *Gulf Stream Literary Magazine*'s 2020 fiction prize. Her fiction chapbook, *Hard Winter, First Thaw*, was published by Michigan Writers Cooperative Press, 2009. Her poems and stories appear in *Dunes Review*, *The Best of Cutthroat*, *Flyway: Journal*

of Writing & Environment, *Hypertext Magazine*, and *South Carolina Review*. She serves as Assistant Creative Nonfiction Editor of *Gigantic Sequins.*

Jamie Ross writes, paints, hauls water and chops wood on a mesa near Taos, NM, where ravens dance by the moon on snow. He also lives in Mexico, where every mariachi knows *Eres Tu* by heart. His poems have been published in many marvelous journals, also in *Best New American Poets 2007.* His 2010 collection, *Vinland*, received the First Book Poetry Prize from Four Way Books.

Mel Ruth is an PhD student at Georgia State University, with a focus on poetry. Mel has pieces published in *Pleiades, Emerson Review, New Pages* and more. Mel was a Slice Literary Magazine "Bridging the Gap" Finalist, and their chapbook "A Name Among Bone," was a semi-finalist in the 2020 Black River Chapbook Contest. Follow them on Twitter @_Mel_Ruth_.

Mary Salisbury's short fiction has been published in *Cutthroat's Truth to Power, The Whitefish Review, and Flash Fiction Magazine*. Salisbury's essay, "Ancient Oaks," was featured in *Fiction Southeast*. Mary's poetry has appeared in *Calyx.* Two of Salisbury's chapbooks were published by Finishing Line Press: *Come What May*, in 2014, and *Scarlet Rain Boots*, in 2020. Mary Salisbury is an Oregon Literary Arts Fellowship recipient and a graduate of Pacific University's MFA in writing program.

Leslie Contreras Schwartz is the 2019-2021 Houston Poet Laureate, whose fourth book, *Black Dove / Paloma Negra* (FlowerSong Press, 2020) is a finalist for the 2020 Best Book of Poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters. Her work has appeared in *Missouri Review, Iowa Review,* and *Pleiades.* She is also currently a faculty member at the new Alma College's MFA low-residency program in creative writing.

**K. Ka`imilani Leota Sellers** graduated from University of Hawaii at Hilo with a BA in English Literature. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from Eastern Kentucky University. She has taught Language Arts and Creative Writing for 11 years. K. Ka`imilani is a queer woman of both Samoan and Caucasian descent, involved with the LGBTQ Writer's Caucus AWP. She is a Finalist in Center for Women's Writers' CNF Penelope Niven Award, 2019, and received a CNF Emerging Writer Award from Bluegrass Writers Studio, 2020. She is Published in *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Napantla An Anthology for Queer Poets of Color,* and *The Chaffin Journal.*

Neil Silberblatt is founder & director of Voices of Poetry. Since 2012, he's curated 400 plus poetry events in MA, CT, NY & NJ, including Cambridge Public Library and Provincetown Art Association & Museum, featuring U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky & Pulitzer Prize winner Frank Bidart as well as those who have not (yet) published. Neil's poems appear in *Plume Poetry Journal, Tiferet Journal, American Journal of Poetry, Tikkun Daily, Collateral Damage* and *Culinary Poems*. He is author of several poetry collections: *So Far, So Good* and *Present Tense*. His most recent, *Past Imperfect* (Nixes Mate Books, 2018), was nominated for the Mass. Book Award in Poetry. In his spare time, Neil battles Stage IV metastatic colon cancer.

Zach Simon lives and writes in Portland, Oregon. He will be starting an MFA poetry program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in fall 2021.

Cassie Premo Steele, Ph.D., is a lesbian, ecofeminist, mother, poet, novelist, and essayist. The author of 16 books, including 6 books of poetry, her poetry has been nominated 6 times for the Pushcart Prize. She is a recipient of The Archibald Rutledge Prize, The John Edward Johnson Prize, and the Carrie McCray Literary Award for Poetry. She was a Finalist for the Rita Dove Poetry Award judged by the current US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. She lives with her wife in Columbia, South Carolina.

Kurt Trzcinski is an ecologist who has studied many ecosystems around the world, and is currently studying woodpeckers and the birds that depend on the cavities they create. He thrives at the edge of poetry and science, and hopes that together they can create new visons of how we relate to the world. At the 2018 International Ornithological Congress he curated, along with poets Stephen Collis and Lorna Crozier, a chapbook-anthology of science and poetry called *Migrations Songs.* His debut chapbook *Sacred Greens* was recently published by Alfred Gustav Press*.*

Edward Vidaurre is an award winning poet and author of seven collections of poetry with his eight collection *Cry, Howl* forthcoming in the fall of 2021. He is the 2018-2019 City of McAllen,TX Poet Laureate, afive time Pushcart Prize nominated poet and publisher of FlowerSong Press and its sister imprint Juventud Press.

Junious Ward is a poet living in Charlotte, NC and author of *Sing Me A Lesser Wound* (Bull City Press). Junious has attended and/or received support from: Breadloaf Writers Conference, Callaloo, The Frost Place and The Watering Hole. His poems have appeared or are upcoming in *Four Way Review, Crab Fat Magazine*, *Lackadaisy Literary Magazine*, and *Diode Poetry Journal* among others.

Sunni Brown Wilkinson's poetry appears in *Western Humanities Review, Sugar House Review, Hayden's Ferry Review, SWWIM, Crab Orchard Review,* and *BODY* among other journals and anthologies. She is the author of *The Marriage of the Moon and the Field* (Black Lawrence Press 2019, finalist for the Hudson Prize) and *The Ache & The Wing* (forthcoming 2021, winner of Sundress's 2020 Chapbook Prize). She also won *New Ohio Review's* NORward Poetry Prize. She teaches at Weber State University and lives in northern Utah with her husband and three sons.

Originally from Boulder, Colorado, **Kris Whorton** lives in Chattanooga where she teaches writing at the University of Tennessee and Hamilton and Bradley County Jails; she also teaches teens, adults, and mental health members in the community. Her poetry has appeared most recently in *The Greensboro Review #109, Poet's Choice*, and *Salmon Creek Journal*. Her fiction has been published in Driftwood Press, Scarlet Leaf Review, and elsewhere; Her Creative Non-Fiction has been anthologized.

Kuo Zhang is a faculty member at Western Colorado University. She has a bilingual book of poetry in Chinese and English, *Broadleaves* (Shenyang Press). Her poem “One Child Policy” won second place in the 2012 Society for Humanistic Anthropology [SHA] Poetry Competition, American Anthropology Association. She served as poetry & arts editor for the *Journal of Language & Literacy Education* in 2016-2017. Her poems have appeared in numerous literary magazines, including *Gyroscope Review, Coffin Bell Journal, Roadrunner Review, Lily Poetry Review, Bone Bouquet, K’in, North Dakota Quarterly, Adanna Literary Journal, Raising Mothers*, and *MUTHA Magazine*.

“SCREAM,” Print by Ron Fundingsland