Red Wheelbarrow

LITERARY MAGAZINE

National Edition, 2021

SCOTT MILLER: Artificial Stars, Night watercolor, 11" x 8", 2021

Red Wheelbarrow

LITERARY MAGAZINE

FIFTH ANNUAL POETRY PRIZE

❖

POETRY: SALINAS VALLEY STATE PRISON

ART BY JESSICA DIANA GARZA, BARBARA LAWRENCE, SCOTT MILLER, NYE' LYN THO, ELIZABETH JIMÉNEZ MONTELONGO

❖

ARCHIVAL INTERVIEW:GARY SNYDER

INTERVIEWS: STEPHEN KUUSISTO, DAVID ALLEN SULLIVAN

From 1976 to 1999 this magazine was known as *Bottomfish*, a name that referred to neglected, overlooked writing that had (metaphorically) fallen to the bottom of the sea. We hope that *Red Wheelbarrow* also signifies unpretentiousness and the casting of a wide net in search of new, exciting young writers as well as an ongoing commitment to originality, courage, and craft.

Red Wheelbarrow publishes twice a year. The National Edition publishes literary and artistic works from all over the country and the world. The Student Edition is open to De Anza and Foothill College students. We welcome submissions of all kinds, and we seek to publish a diverse range of styles and voices. The National Edition is published each fall. We accept submissions each winter through February 15th to be considered by our *Red Wheelbarrow* student editorial staff. Poetry Prize deadline, however, is August 15th.

Poetry: submit up to five poems
Fiction: submit one short story (up to 5,000 words) or up to three short-shorts
Drama: submit one play or screenplay (up to 5,000 words)
Creative Nonfiction: submit one personal essay (up to 5,000 words)
Photographs and Drawings: submit up to five b/w prints or digital files (.tif or .psd format); please do not send originals
Comics: submit one b/w strip
Other: submit one!
Please submit text files for the National Edition in MS Word (.doc or .docx). *Red Wheelbarrow* Poetry Prize submissions are screened and judged anonymously and independently. Deadline for the second annual poetry prize is July 31, 2022, through Submittable.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Red Wheelbarrow* is committed to supporting the work of fine letterpress printers. Felicia Rice at Moving Parts Press has printed the winning broadsides for our *Red Wheelbarrow* Poetry Prize several times now including this year celebrating "In Praise of the Jellyfish," by Susan Cohen of Berkeley. Moving Parts Press was founded in 1977 by Felicia to create and publish limited edition artists' books, broadsides, and prints. Felicia's home and letterpress printing studio in the Santa Cruz Mountains (along with 43 years of her work) went up in smoke in the CZU Lightning fire on August 20, 2020. Felicia and her husband Jim are safe and have relocated to a cabin in Mendocino, California, but Felicia is now rebuilding her workshop from scratch, including a new studio building.

Please donate to raise Moving Parts Press through Go-Fund-Me: https://www.gofundme.com/f/raise-moving-parts-press-from-the-ashes. Ten percent of this fund will go to victims of the fires in the Santa Cruz Mountains. You can order Felicia's broadsides (including some of our past prize winners) at https://movingpartspress.com/category/broadsides.

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THE POETS OF MYANMAR

Khet Thi (1978–2021)
K Za Win (Chan Thar Swe) (1982–2021).
Sein Win (1941–1921)
Myint Myint Zin (Kyi Lin Aye) (1995–1921)

They started to burn the poets
But ash makes for more fertile soil.

They shoot us in the head
But don't know that the revolution is in the heart

Khet Thi

Barbara Lawrence: A Slough of Color #1

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BARBARA LAWRENCE: Horses and Vineyard 30" x 40", oil on canvas

Walking in Moonlight (excerpt) | *Li Bai*

古朗月行（节录）
李白

小时不识月，
呼作白玉盘。
又疑瑶台镜，
飞在青云端。

When I was young, I didn't understand the moon.
I thought it was a white plate made of jade,
Or a mirror from heaven
That had flown to the top of the clouds.

Translated by Gary Young with Yanwen Xu

Like Thistle-Down | *Charles Atkinson*

Mayflies shiver the surface, a gray early
light, a mist on Crystal Lake. The old man's
here; he must know where—far shore?

Slide a night-crawler onto the hook:
what's a fit benediction for live bait—
a quick cast? a short prayer?

He's not after the paltry perch or
bluegill at this hour. Could he be stalking
the rumor of a full-grown large-mouth bass?

A fish that size can drift in an eddy, then
strike from beneath and rocket into air
to slip the hook it's swallowed whole.

Ancient creature, apex species—
will eat its own, a third its size.
Stop—the old man's pole bends double!

He plays out slack, reels it back
further each run, till something heavy
flops at his feet, still fighting the hook.

He knows to let it be, then let it go—
a day that clings like thistle-down.

How Batteries Work | *Lisa Allen Ortiz*

Bewildering, the silent
chemistry inside—
electrons, ions,
destabilized lithium.

When we got bad news
yesterday at our house
my daughter wailed
and pummeled the belly of a pillow
while the rest of us circled
the couch and watched
the yellow tassels flinch.

After that, we ate a silent lunch.
Napkins folded, steaming bowl
of vegetables and rice.
Electrons dripped across the table
cathode to anode.

There's a Sufi saying that a life is made of 10,000 joys
and 10,000 sorrows.
Tenderness and what's left
after tenderness is gone. Across
the terminus of our bodies we feel it:
an attempt to even out.

After lunch we felt sad and sorry. We
mended what we could, sending blue
heart texts and tiny chicks in
tiny broken eggs.
We slept.
I thought or dreamed
of wires running up
the dark insides of walls.

By morning, the fog was charged
thick against the window panes.
Someone woke up early
and sliced fruit, lining bowls
along the counter top, one set out
for each of us.

Five Prose Poems with Titles Stolen From James Tate | *Stephen Kuusisto*

1 The President Slumming

Furtively he seems to grieve. The sky runs away. He mumbles. In one hand he holds a likeness of his heart; in the other a bottle of Worcestershire sauce. The alley is wonderful! It's the true church in America—a place where beliefs get voiced and arguments are settled. He's always known this. Perhaps he doesn't know as much as others but he knows that. He knows Anglo-Saxon eyes; the Blue Danube; the old man's razor strop; which weeds you can eat raw beside the railroad tracks; the face, the genuine face of the daughter of the sun. So many things he can't say aloud! Anyway when he's feeling better he's going to the precision parts factory. He will try to come to the point.

2. Conjuring Roethke

Down river, up; late August, rain in the afternoon; earthworm walks across a book. The sinews in my neck have gone dry. Need a moist poem soon. Look at all those bats! I am looking for you Captain. I bow my head. Tender landscape. Father freshly buried. My father. He loved you Roethke. Like you he grew up a wide-eyed provincial. Oh he had heavy secrets. He knew his flowers.

3. Twilight Sustenance Hiatus

Glad Nietzsche wasn't my pal. Can you imagine? All those talons and maws? I like a gentle shower storm. I love a continent without much on it. Let's leave the locals alone. Did I tell you about the fair leafage? The Tsar used to walk here. You place the future by moving these pebbles. No tears were allowed here in the old days. And the crow, small as a bitten fingernail, flies through my torso.

4. The List of Famous Hats

Anyone can carve a clump of shrubbery into the shape of a rabbit. Envisioning the shrub in the first place is more thrilling. Best of all is to make a hat. God made the first one. All at once you fall in love with things as well as people. The lake-heron stands on a slim cast-off branch that has fallen among rocks. Somehow the world of death enters your seeing—and all your language obeys its little urgencies

and everything is clear. A bunch of yellow grapes unharvested in the roadside vineyard.…Haycocks standing in fibrous bundles in the last light.…A lone black mare nosing the weeds.…The wary and subtle intellect falls apart.…Here's your hat.

5. A Dime Found in the Snow

I come from snow people. Walking home one night in Helsinki I found a spoon in a snowbank. Took it home. I didn't know if it was worth something. OK. I never found out. In Noir Zen things simply disappear. These are delicate losses: a man may find he is no longer the emperor of his room. A girl sees at last that her mother doesn't love anybody. A clock chimes at the back of the house. Meanwhile, I have to get going, just like you my friend. The lines of the day are fuzzy. Where are my gloves?

Redhead | *D. J. Savarese*

The woman looks a little nauseated,
maybe even seasick
or morning sick.
She's chewing ginger to calm her stomach,
which is like a dog
that will not stay or sit.
It just rolls over and over.
It needs obedience.
It needs a bath.
Please stop barking, stomach.
The mailman is a cup of broth;
he approaches—
you guessed it—gingerly.
He's like the Pharaoh Ramesses
or Homer's Menelaus:
a redhead,
which means,
the Greeks would tell you,
he's courageous.
My first Christmas out of
foster care, I got the stomach flu.
My body emptied like a garbage truck;
fluids departed as on a tidal flat.
I had never felt so miserable.
Because I do not speak,
I had to use my hands.
"Help me," I signed to my new father,
"help me," and I could tell
he wanted to,
rubbing my back
as I retched.

To Green in Place | *D. J. Savarese*

Mal, is it the way plants call to us without words?
The way they green in place, as on a treadmill,
running for our lives not theirs?
The way they eat light for lunch
and burp out happiness?

You say in color all you know.
You make of shape a family,
a kind of fitness or triangle joy.
Say hello to plant-mom for me,
Say hello to the arriving leaves leaves leaves.

While on the Ventilator | *Joanna Martin, RN*

doctors give her a fifty-fifty chance of living

give her and give
her four children a fifty-fifty chance of losing *her*, their mother

her husband explains to their two-year old
mommy's sleeping so she can wake up princess.

While she's on the ventilator,
another patient's brother washes her long black hair,
rubs knots out of her curls they jokingly called her bird's nest as children,
ruby-throated beacon of hummingbird their hope.

Our promise, we're going to save you.

I die, you die, we all die.

As ventilator secrets, *You are (we are) made of breath.*

Robotic devil beast raises helpless chests meticulously,
makes love to living, miraculous.

While on the ventilator, a patient in supine position
walks the cut stone mountain ridges
surrounding his boyhood town. Soothsayer advises,
Don't look up, don't fall in love with the spaciousness of sky,
don't talk to cloud faces, ground your soles, hold on with your toes.

How did I (we) find ourselves here?

Mechanical labyrinth—breakdown of body—
can't speak, can't eat, can't breathe.

While she is on the ventilator her newborn granddaughter takes her first breath,
inflates her lungs, begins the count for all breaths to come

as ventilator takes words, whispers a new language: *tidal volume, positive end-expiratory pressure, fraction of inspired oxygen*.

Become one with ventilator, float in and out of consciousness,
body elongated, feet miles away, sputum throated into lungs,
suctioning core at a great distance, mouth beak, clavicle wings, tethered flight,
crucified down the throat by a plastic tube, mute, taste of oblivion,
life and death held in the crystal balls of upturned palms.

You have no choice, ventilator whispers.

While they are on the ventilator, he loses his job, her house is repossessed,
a new president is elected.

Before I die for you let me just say…

Ventilator takes words: curse words, how-to-make-love-
to-the-earth words, supreme being words.

Why don't you be here, see what it's like? See the sum of love…

Orbital sockets, nasal septum, malleus, incus, stapes vibrate against forced breath,
against masked death.

On the ventilator two weeks, three months, eternity, who knows
how long?

Drugs to lose consciousness, to unremember. *Paralytic agents.* Sedation.
Disorientation. Drugs to hold back eternal flight.

There's nothing more we can do—confessional, sinless—it's up to you now.

Wordless, she howls the vowel,
joins the chorus of wavering exhalations, exaltations to God.

Clown Palace | *Ralph James Savarese*

> *Driving with my father through a wooded road leading from East Hampton to Amagansett, we suddenly came upon two women, mother and daughter, both tall, thin, almost cadaverous, both bowing, twisting, grimacing.*
>
> —George Huntington, unpublished notes for a 1909 lecture at the New York Neurological Society

Like cattle at a salt lick,
we couldn't resist
the taste of early death.
We were at a McDonald's
in the town of Grinnell
where we used to live,
waiting to order some fries,
when a woman—let's call her
an incomplete stranger;
after all, she lacked decency—
came up to me
and, pointing like Edward
Scissorhands at my boy
(her nails were that long),
said, "It's such a shame.
He's so good looking."
It was lunch hour,
and the place was packed.
Packed, I want to say,
like birds in a can: everything
chirping, everything
twitching; a metallic thrum
had not so much landed
in our ears as begun to move
around in them frantically.
Because my son's perceptual
life requires assembly—
think of it as a piece
of furniture you buy online;
you better have a screw-
driver and a set of pliers—
he needs defenses.
He's what scientists call
a bottom-up processor.
He leads with life, not ideas.

He inspects everything.
His brain is like a coastal
town without a levee:
the world floods in.
And so, he flaps his arms
to counter it, to self-regulate.
Little clown palace turned
shattered aviary….
I went pomegranate. I went
strawberry. I went grape.
"It's such a shame;
you're so ignorant!" I shouted
at the woman. "It's such
a shame; you're so old
and so wrinkled! Yuck!"
The manager phoned the police
who then asked us to leave.
One of the officers said,
"She didn't call him 'retarded.'"
That, friends, is the limit
of sensitivity training.
Cops have shot Black people
and autistic people for less.
"Get out of here alive,"
I told myself.
More than a decade later,
I happen upon Huntington's
report of his first encounter
with those who'd soon have
his name stapled to them.
"I stared in wonderment,"
he wrote, "almost in fear.
What could it mean?"
The primal scene of stigma:
a child leading
with his frontal lobes.
The eyes are cattlemen
branding steers,
up on their high horses,
preparing meat for market.
It doesn't mean
anything, George.

The Difference between Die and Dice, Or Taking the Test for Huntington's Disease |

Ralph James Savarese

> *"I'm single," says the corpse.*
> —Old saying

You're driving alone and have a heart attack—
there's no one to grab the wheel.
How long have you been sitting in that pond?
The coroner deploys a dating app.
Or you're driving with your spouse and hit black ice.

In the plural, the cube with dots becomes the road.
(The soft "c" inserts itself like a tongue.)
Chances are you'll need a coffin,
and bits of you will find an "O."
Your pact like Mattie and Ethan Frome's.

The boxman's taking bets, but the table's cold.
Your genome's a kind of Vegas Strip
(with breath you paid your vigorish).
The car, of course, could only roll.

Cut Up | *Ralph James Savarese*

I make terrible jokes every time I go into a hospital.
—Sanjeev Bhaskar

A neighbor who has cancer would like
to stand on a stage and be laughed at.
It beats an office job to a pulp.
A joke is a drug, off-label, off-hope.
I'm his guinea pig, his lab rat.

Every night in the driveway: a cocktail.
(The sun, like a tumor, shrinks.)
How did the quilter become an actuary?
She used odds and ends.
"You're killing it!" I say.

2021 RED WHEELBARROW POETRY PRIZE

Poetry Center San José and *Red Wheelbarrow* are excited to publish here the winners (along with finalists and selected semifinalists) of the fifth annual poetry prize. The poet Mark Doty was this year's final judge.

2021 WINNERS

1ST PRIZE: "In Respect to the Jellyfish"
by Susan Cohen of Berkeley, California

2ND PRIZE: "Consider Salt"
by Judith H. Montgomery of Oregon City, Oregon

3RD PRIZE: "Euphemisms"
by Karan Kapoor of New Delhi, India

These poets will receive awards of $1,000, $500, and $250 respectively, and Felicia Rice of Moving Parts Press (Mendocino, California) will produce an original broadside of Susan Cohen's winning poem,"In Respect to the Jellyfish."

2021 FINALISTS

"The Language of Dogs," Janine Certo, East Lansing, Michigan
"Cassowary," Stephanie L. Harper, Indianapolis, Indiana
"Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program," Gillat Kol, Princeton, New Jersey
"Resoration," K.T. Landon, Arlington, Massachusetts
"What This Elegy Wants," Preeti Vangani, San Francisco, California

SELECTED 2021 SEMIFINALISTS

"Yous Hush," Jacie Andrews
"The Birds," Jessica Cohn
"I Am Haunted by Where Our Hands Would," Mackenzie Cole
"Last Rites," Rebecca Faulkner
"Another Country," Jean Harper
"Novo Brčko," Milica Mijatović
"jazz," Hikari Miya
"now we know what we mean when we say water is holy," Kim Nall
"chinatown, pt.2," Samantha Hsiung
"Kaibab," Vivian Underhill

In Respect to the Jellyfish | *Susan Cohen*

Because we occupy the wrong animal—don't you too feel it?
—Lucia Perillo

Even the gelatinous—moon jellies, giant jellies,
sea gooseberries, and by-the-wind sailors that litter
the beach—have lived their animal lives

and left a shiny trace that lasts only for a while.
Like our own dead, some are still capable of stinging.
I step carefully as I look through them, their jellied

bodies on the sand melting into gleam, as if they've never
known where they end and the world begins.
So they dangle in the ocean with a certain uncertainty

at the edges, empty in their fullness and filled
by their emptiness. Why wouldn't I be content to float
day and night, to let my ambivalence take the form

of water shoving me this way and that? To need no
protection of bone and leave no fossil,
living without architecture, outside of history.

Consider Salt | *Judith H. Montgomery*

corralled in the table shaker. Or loosed,
a star-sprinkle swath across the breakfast
egg's gleaming swell. Falling unremarked,

white grit on pine planks polished underfoot.
Once, a salt-stuffed burlap sack could ransom
raw silk bolts, count as the Roman soldier's

salary. Gibran says *There must be something
strangely sacred about salt. It is in our tears
and in the sea.* Wrapped with fresh-baked bread,

salt gifts from home to home to bless new-
hewn doors. We praise with *salt of the earth*,
dismiss *not worth his salt.* But which words

would we use for Lot's never-named wife?
Akhmatova bodies her looking back, toward
the burning city, to recall the taste of her lost

loaves, loves, her *spinning shed*, her history.
Disobedient. Therefore God evaporates her
tears until she's stopped forever. Pillared.

Pilloried. Salt becomes her remains. Remains
of women torn from their towns, their stories,
to follow mates or hearts, to desiccate

under foreign suns. *In our tears and in the sea.*
Each of us salted—the blood that runs the heart
is salt as the salt sea that runs and washes

every shore, harbors life from pole to pole.
Each evaporates to join the air, leaving signs
behind as *fleur de sel*, flower of salt, that rare

lace float of white that blooms even as it dries.

Euphemisms | *Karan Kapoor*

phool chugna: to pick flowers as if a bird pecking at a piece of bread.

To pick flowers is to pick bones
from the embers once the body
has been burning for two nights.
The men execute alone —
Hindus do not want anyone
crying beside the dead.
Death is a note in the rhythm of life,
not the coda. The scriptures think
only women cry. I think of my sister
who believes death is a translation
of matter; she wants to pick her
bones from her cremains.
The men shove their calloused
fingers in the many small, and still
warm, black and white mountains
of ash, looking for bones — beaks
of crows picking on a carcass.
I do not understand why these
men are so rough with her.

My fingers are moving as if
caressing a flame. I pick one
small, cylindrical *flower*, dip
it in ash, rub it behind both
my ears, between my brows,
behind elbows and knees,
make an impermanent tattoo
around my wrist. Afraid
my hard stare might tear
the flower apart, I close
my eyes. I turn around
so no one can see me stretch
my t-shirt, and run a dark line
in the middle of my chest.
Then I dip my finger in one
of the many mountains
and thumb the ashen tip
on my eyelids, then at last
on my navel, waiting
for the grains to seep
through my skin.

is to never be caught alone at an Italian bakery
buying a dozen cream horns, confessing
to the uninterested cashier, *these are my mum's*
favorite, are not were. Not the quiver in the finger
over the cursor contributing to a cancer
research fund. How much giving is good enough
for grief to give up? How much research?
I have seen my father research a new bride.
SecondChance and CleanStart and well-meaning
aunts. I have seen my mother's white nightie
hang behind the bathroom door like a god's robe
and compared the divine rogan josh
the new mother stews to my mom's, and her
rotis lacking fluff, her high-salt sabzi, the
littlest flaw in her chutney. Her every endearment:
a splinter in my ears. Grief, you grumpy
mother-in-law, this elegy is tired of you
as in housewife-tired, as in housewife staying
quiet about abusive husband tired, as in
if my mother were to see me, which I'm certain
she can, rummaging through the squalor of grief—
through a portal where cream horns are limitless
and free—she'd continue to snack unbothered,
flakes of pastry sprouting on her lip, and say, *tchtch*
tchtchtch, exhausted yet excited as she would
so often get when chasing down a cockroach
scurrying around the house with a long broom.
She'd trap the apocalypse-surviving beast
in the broom's hairs, then smack the jhadu
over and over against the floor and draw out
the wiggling enemy by its one antenna, fling it
straight outside the window, and as if that freeness
was hers too, shout: *go be free* into the certitude
of gravity.

The Language of Dogs | *Janine Certo*

Lab Mix. Found without tags. Same
black coat, same weight, same name
as my dead dog of two days. I paced
outside the cages. An eleven-year-old
beagle shot me a look of disappointment,
then turned her back to me. The vet said
they do that sometimes, become grief-
stricken of never being chosen. The dog
I came for had visible ribs, a patchy fur,
lost from stress. The volunteer escorted me
to a private room. I already knew
I was good at this, armed with training
treats for when he sat, shook. I took him for
a test walk. He pulled, zigzagged the trees,
our route circuitous. I drove off with Harley,
a temporary leash, and a bag of dogfood.
He slept in the relief of the backseat, in the balm
of my satisfaction. It was strangely like driving
a loved one home from the hospital, held on
all sides by blue and the branched silences
and hesitation of Thelonious Monk.
Home, he played limply with a toy, fed from
the old dog's bowl, slept in the new bed.
But when he woke, he leaped on the couch
and upon catching his reflection in a mirror, broke
a lamp. Stunned, confused, he barked without stop,
watched and waited for what I would do. What
he would do. There, in the clash of sporadic
sun and oak, he towered, back legs rooted, almost
eye-level with me, chest forward as if on display, a face
of love howling, a face so right to be asking:
Now what?

Cassowary | *Stephanie L. Harper*

six-foot-tall
double-wattled southern fowl

flightless
aficionado of fallen
laurel, plum, wild grape, nightshade,
& strange neither to fungi,
grasses, frogs, snails, nor carrion

mohawked with a battering ram
pate of peacock & cobalt blues
perched atop a stately stretch
of scarlet neck

defender of emerald eggs
in clutches of three to eight
swift with a fatal rib-kick
or phalangeal dagger-strike
to slice a jugular…

what pools so dark
in the bush-nut-brown
heart of your gaze—

a matter profound

or merely far-away?

Restoration | *K. T. Landon*

… also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:10)

What the whirlwind takes up
comes down again, but never
in the same place and never
the same. God as your worst
ex-boyfriend, the one who
smashed your dead mother's
china, bought you something
better, and says your lack
of gratitude is your lack of
faith. What kind of love bleeds
around the edges of power?

Job, full of years, at dinner
with his new wife, new sons—
the desert night a canopy of stars
above them. The air is soft.
There is wine and good food,
and the laughter of his family
swirls around him. He offers
a careful prayer of thanks to God
for all his blessings. No reply.
Behind him in the restless
sand: ten graves, tended.

Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program | *Gillat Kol*

City officials played
Land, Sea, Air with me;
redefining the neighborhood border,
and with it—
redefined the location of our borderline house,
redefined
me.
I was a child hoping to land
on the right side of the line, on dry land.
People outside distressed neighborhoods,
so I thought, are drownproof, distress
free.

Dad loved the neighborhood's covering hood—
the lower property tax, the subsidized daycares,
drying laundry off the balcony clothesline
and watching as everyone's white underwear darkened.

Mom covered me as I entered a breach in the fence
of the good school in the good neighborhood,
full of kids for whom definitions were just a thing
from geometry class.
I was the protégé from the projects,
always late, and had to pick up the pace
climbing up the stairs to enter school.
Mom had to pick up
extra shifts at the cleaners.
I waved goodbye from the entrance,
sending her away
before my new friends could see her.

Mom tells her coworkers
that her daughter is a doctor.
And I'm again a kid on a raft
leaving her behind;
a refugee with fake documents,
who crossed the border illegally
alone.

now we know what we mean when we say water is holy | *Kim Nall*

Dallas, February 2021

now we know what we mean when we say water is holy

Holy like the river they dammed to build this city,
the alchemy of water for oil, bricks for barons

and mud flats for everyone else, a whisper of water
for the muddy hands that built it

Holy like the floods that shake the South,
where the Word is water, that shake our faith

and turn Saints to refugees, lining up in the
Superdome to receive the sacrament

of a boxed meal and two nine-ounce bottles
while the storm rages in the streets

Holy like the thaw, like black ice, slush,
the drama of folly and escape, holy like

the communion of a gushing fire hydrant,
neighbors filling pots, buckets, desert mouths, a river

swirling luxuriously at our feet and flowing,
glittering, into the gutters—

Holy like that, like
shall we gather at the river

that flows from the alley behind Neiman Marcus
last night I swear I saw them bring out the cisterns

from the Cathedral Guadalupe and pour holy water
into Dixie cups for anyone who wanted to drink.

I Am Haunted by Where Our Hands Would |
Mackenzie Cole

I am haunted by where our hands would have touched one another. Where our hands gesture, reach out, take one another like ghosts as we sit still, and quiet, holding on like stars hold on across one vast distance, burning.

She was thinking of signs for a plant garden when her boss told her to use *had* to use *used*: it is to be less confusing because we may never know if the Salish are still using yarrow the same way they once used yaro. If they are, or if they had, or if they will again. This way no one coming into the garden, my friend M told me yesterday, would('ve') be(en) confused by the unusual grammar—the make believe in a garden of make believe—the Salish names for plants beside the English without a word about the genocide before this garden. A genocide seeded and hidden by the English language.

We could('ve) all stand(ood) to be more confused about our he or she, our they, to be less firmly planted in our mouths, we could all stand more ricochet in meaning, to look a long time into the muteness of each other, to fall heavy from the sky and thick, to settle over patches of mud and grass until the land is white and then to melt away in the rain. To be less firm in ourselves, myself, one's self, themselves, and I, to be held across vast distances, and still be aloft, floating, burning.

Novo Brčko | *Milica Mijatović*

Baka's one-bedroom apartment is a bluedusk-colored
poem. Its pigeons coo me awake; city buses cradle me in
their wheels. The balconies—one in the bedroom, the other
in the living room—let just enough of the outside world
in. Soft shadows on the wall play hide-and-seek with
my dreams. I sleep on the pullout couch, brush my teeth
in the purple-tiled bathroom, eat on the wooden chairs Deda
bought a few centuries back. It's just my grandma and me.
We look through black-and-white photographs of her life—
I watch as she lingers over some, passes quickly over others.
She brings out Mama's wedding dress, and I put it on, twirl.
She cries. I sink into my book on the couch as the TV
hums just one octave above the refrigerator. It's bluedusk—
the sun is setting. The curtains walk with the wind, and
I remember Deda's impressive collection of pins. We run
out of drinking water, so I head down to the public fountain,
two empty jugs in my hand. I read the graffitied signs again,
mostly love declarations and nationalistic leanings. I climb
the two flights back home, Baka serves peaches and plums,
and we talk about the weather. There's enough hot water
to shower, and I listen to the 11 p.m. bus from Beograd
zoom into the station. Baka plays a movie; tonight, it's *Ocean's
Eleven*. We doze through the action, murmur goodnight.
I head to my room, embrace the cool sheets as the old, drunk
men in the bar across the street sing some obscure battle song,
strum their guitars off-key, and I let them lull me to sleep.

The Birds | *Jessica Cohn*

How strange, the apparatus of wings. A friend
shared surveillance of birds in migration: land,
flat & beige, like postal paper on a box; the Great
Lakes, in cyan; airborne passerines & shorebirds,
etch-a-sketched in algae-colored dust; a Seurat,
their small warm bodies, upward movements,
blossoming in time lapse—

In dreams, a flock is an awakening; a lone bird,
a hunch. Like any small bird, I left the Midwest
in season. Followed a brother. Left the hail, heavy
ores, & mosquitoes. & our sister, who stayed on.
A red cardinal appeared after we buried our dad.
After Mom passed, too. Robins were more common
in yards of childhood. We used to break bread, scatter
its white manna for red breasts & mourning doves.
We used to take binoculars & boxed powdered donuts,
drive to the lakes to watch geese head south. Charcoal
wings roughing out directions of wind. Places to go.

Birds in migration portend something better, but
the bird count is down by the billions since those days.
I am so far gone, here, where dark-eyed gulls circle
berms of sand & cobble. The salted body of the Pacific,
a void to the west. My brother is in the South now,
behind loblolly pines & books. My sister, she holds
on. The man she married is not himself. He wants to go
home. Even when home. When the screens of weary
blue evening switch on, I watch for their weather
as if it's mine—their blue rains, purple sleet, whiteouts,
& now, their birds. Flights, ever fewer. Raven roams
a brown field, looking for seed. I pray in falcons.

jazz | *Hikari Miya*

I snip the e off of emotion with a
snap of my fingers—haha, move,
bitch, shake those pear hips to the sound
of rain dancing through cement firmament.
I know I haven't written in a while
but I still slant my *A*'s and *T*s even when
I'm not paying attention to my Q's because
they just too damn loud. here, I'll send you
a postcard from the Fillmore district
of San Francisco telling you how much
I miss the swoop of trumpets, the golden
swoon of trombones and the velvet tones
of a bass so deep sharks deep in the bay bob
their blunt blind heads. I click through silence
like a metronome down gum gray sidewalks
on the way to the post office, raise a glass to toast
those blue-collar workers sending all our
shit saying *wish you were here but not*
really! sforzandos take up so much light
within my head, fireworks poppin' through
late morning mist of petrichor promise—
and man, do I really hate wanting more. but
I'm here to fill this flat world with hills,
no, mountains, the color of my t-shirt dresses
and the flavor of my skin that I ain't letting
no one call burnt. I may be japa-pino, but
there's more beyond my blood that's not
sweet, sass, and sweat. I'll tell you I love you
when I finish my Disney movie marathon
tomorrow night. don't let no one tell you
you can't dance without drums or the moon.

chinatown pt.2 | *Samantha Hsiung*

> On June 16th of 2021, a 94-year-old Asian woman was stabbed by a man while on her way to a grocery store in San Francisco.

baba / look / at the sky / tonight / there are more stars than / I have ever seen / don't you know that / stars are / the spirits of those that have / unbirthed themselves / meaning that / the sky is full of / souls that have reincarnated as light / as holes in the darkness / baba / look / at this city / isn't san francisco / so gorgeous? / everywhere / there are / paper birds sewn into air / metal dragons perching on rooftops / weeds blooming through the asphalt & concrete & city streets & last night I / tiptoed / to the grocery store / to buy some nectared carambola / afraid you would catch me / if I made a sound / but instead / it was death who caught / an old woman / because / there she was / in the corner / being stabbed / by / a / man / & / his / kitchen knife / & when he was done / her exit wound leaked / like a melting sun / & all its stars / listen, baba: this city is no longer gorgeous so I will torch it with all the stars that have not died & watch the buildings dress themselves in flames & after I'm done we will dance together in the moonlight until the moon drowns in its own glow & after everything has become ash we will look at san francisco again & it will be so / much / more / gorgeous

Kaibab | *Vivian Underhill*

We drove through the Navajo Reservation
And the Hopi Reservation.
I told you about the old peach orchards
Nestled in the canyons
And the soldiers who destroyed them.

Snow came, and ice.
The dog refused to pee
Though you clucked and murmured to her softly.
Shadowy elk bloomed up in the cold trees
And then shrank away.

Betrayal, but an old one, and not clear whose,
Froze the air between us.
It babbled for understanding through our mouths
Until I was howling at your driving form.
A brown bird took flight at the trees' edge.

The bird became antlers that pulled
an elk wild-eyed across the road.
We slept in the car among small pines
Tiny dry snowflakes crackled on the roof.
Your heat warmed my skin and I pulled away sweating.

Morning shattered still and diffuse
Your footsteps creaked away
Whispers of regret shivered the blankets
But I, still a pillar of ice—
Oh touch me.

Yous hush | *Jacie Andrews*

After C. D. Wright

Them moccasins bad as the weather
and bust guts like June.
The door knobs disappear in the coop.

We walk the hill to the spring and think,
Rain, moving, it might.
Muscles are handed down for centuries
and remember. We doubt our own name.

That water good, but it far. Them snake bellies
is full. Nonna say, Yous hush, doll baby. Yous hush.
Vade got a sister find a vein quick as magic.
You ain't the only one scared.

Twelve kids in twenty-four years. It's easy
to forget. But she shells and watches and shells
and worries. Gets down on those hands.
Saves money for the times we need it,
like this summer, when the air is a tomb.

The woman got that country stare,
that thorough and urgent, that cain't do it
no more. She married Ike with a quarter
in his pocket. Birthed momma waiting
on water and help. Took nothing
but her faith from Sicily.

Still, she boils what we bring. Rolls out cavatelli
with her thumb and tells me how to write it.
We are sending a letter. Nonna can't read.
Tell her I believes it, she says,
tell her I just believes.

She signs her name, and her tongue
sticks to the bottom of her mouth.

Each mark quivers perfect, nervous
and knowing what it's doing.
We hide the paper in my shoe.
The backs of her hands go to her hip bones,
and she looks into the steam. Things ache
out of her sometimes in this kitchen,
true as what babies know.

Even if we sinnin, kiddie, one day
they gonna build an escalator
all the way to the moon.

Last Rites | *Rebecca Faulkner*

Eventually I figure out how best to kill him.
The drag & pull logistics, swift & stumbling,
blood on the kitchen floor, the night loaded.
When it's done I'll dig a man-size plot in the groin
of the garden, wedged between the broken fence
& eager clematis. I'll work the soil hard, deep
enough for ten men. Throw in my chipped teeth
& pulled hair, black nightshade & a bluejay feather
for luck. Stale prayers & scrawled notes, the cold
shoulder from next door. I'll sprinkle his eyelids
with shards from beer bottles he hurled with the force
of a gale meeting my jaw, consequences that bruise
& swell. Spare keys from nights I locked him out
the children in bed, itchy blankets smother
their hot breath while I heap earth on his body
to keep him dead. Eventually I figure out
how best to save myself. Weight of a greasy shovel,
my hands bloodied. I prefer the slap
of moonlit bracken, intoning *I won't miss you*
at the howling urgent air. He deserves the worms
not the north facing sun & horse-chestnut shade.
I'll wash him off me & plant perennials, something bright
that will flourish among weeds, next door's curtains
threadbare from twitching. If they ask I'll say
it was the old tabby, the children's favorite.
In spring, when the blossoms dance wildly, I'll scrub
my fingernails clean & invite the neighbors for tea.

Another Country | *Jean Harper*

My brother is staying in my father's house for a week. My brother is staying in my father's house. For a week he will sleep in my father's bed. Eat at my father's table. Shit in my father's bathroom. My brother is staying in my father's house for a week, sleeping in my father's bed, eating at my father's table, bathing his body in my father's bathroom. My father is still alive, living in Assisted Living, in a nursing home, ten miles away. My brother is changing everything in my father's house. He paints the white walls grey, strips the windows of their dressing, empties the closets of their clothes. My father is still alive. He is living in Assisted Living in a nursing home, ten miles from his own home. My brother is boxing up magazines and newspapers and the last of the books my father who is still alive is not reading anymore, books about airplanes and radios, gardening and philosophy. My brother takes my father's furniture out the front door—the dining room table and its chairs, the families of dishes and glasses and pots and pans. My brother packs up the knickknacks and photographs and the letters and notebooks into boxes and boxes and writes DAD'S CRAP in Sharpie black block letters on each one and sets them out for Goodwill or the trash, whichever comes first. Everything that belonged to my father goes—room by room by room. My father is still living, just barely, in a nursing home, in a locked wing, the one for the demented. He spends most of his days seat-belted into a wheelchair—he wears sweatpants and sweat socks and a sweatshirt. My father is shrinking inside his own skin. My father is ninety-one years old. My brother is fifty-four. Exactly thirty-six years eight months and six days separate my father from my brother. My father has no idea who he is anymore. My brother will not imagine himself thirty-six years eight months and six days into the future and into a place where he too will no longer know who he is. That is where compassion lies. It is a quiet country, sparsely inhabited. My brother does not know how to get there. My father is dying. My brother is emptying my father's house.

I find Chad sitting on the bench at the edge of the park. His hands are clasped on top of his head, a sure sign that he is agitated. I take a couple of deep breaths and say out loud the serenity prayer. I pull the car up next to him at the curb and roll down the passenger window.

He is peeved to see me. "What are *you* doing here?" he asks.

"I needed some things at the market, and I thought maybe I'd offer you a ride home."

"I'm waiting for Charlie."

"Charlie's at home, sweetie."

"He got away from me," Chad insists. "Pulled the leash right out from my hand and ran like the dickens after a squirrel."

"Charlie's at home asleep under the pear tree."

His face relaxes, temporarily at ease. Then he snaps back into the moment. "Well, that little turd," he says, climbing into the passenger seat. "If he doesn't want to go for a walk, he should just say so."

"I got you some ice cream."

"The good stuff?"

"The good stuff. You should wear your hat on days like this."

"Couldn't find it."

"I'll look when we get home."

"If I couldn't find it, what makes you think you can?"

"I'm Titania, remember? The fairy queen. Nothing goes missing from me for long."

"Your name's not Titania."

"What is it then?"

"Don't mock me."

"I've got tomato soup. Shall we make some grilled cheese to go with it?"

"Did you buy chips?"

"Shit."

"You should make a list."

"You're right. A list is what I need."

"Any fool knows you make a list before you shop."

He gazes out the passenger window. He pulls his handkerchief from his hip pocket and blows his nose. His lips are moving; he is having a conversation in his head.

Used to be I could lie down for a nap in the afternoons and I

would awake to find him sitting in the chair next to the sofa. But twice now I've awakened to find the front door wide open. Thank God for Victor, our next-door neighbor, who watches to see in which direction Chad wanders.

"Charlie brought me the paper again this morning," he says aloud. "Dropped it right on my slippers. I never taught him that."

"He's a smart boy."

"Why are you going this way?"

The road home is the same road we've travelled for thirty years. "It does look a little different today, doesn't it? I think it's the leaves. When the leaves thin out like this, it almost looks like a different road."

"Don't be ridiculous. It's the same damn road. The same damn trees." He crosses his legs. "Same car, same…what are you, my wife?"

"I'm afraid so. You're stuck with this frumpy old broad."

"You're not so bad."

"Thank you. You're not so bad yourself."

"I need a haircut. Drop me off at Larry's."

Larry, his barber, closed his shop two years ago. He and his wife retired to Florida to be closer to their grandchildren. "Larry doesn't work Mondays, remember?"

"I know that."

"Of course you do."

"Well then, why are you telling me?"

"I guess I must be bored, sweetie. I can't think of anything else to do but hector you with things you already know."

"You got that right."

"How about a game of checkers when we get home?"

"I have work to do. If I don't get these quarterly reports done, McMorland will crucify me."

John McMorland was his boss for the last decade of Chad's professional life. "I'll set some fresh paper next to your typewriter."

"I have plenty of paper. What I need is a new ribbon."

"I've got one in the drawer."

"Which drawer?"

"The one right beneath the typewriter."

"There's no drawer beneath the typewriter. What are you talking about?"

He looks at me for a long while. Afternoons like this the old Chad plays hide and seek with this new one, by turns my sweetie-pie honeybunch and my mean old daddy. I'm getting better at diffusion and distraction. But these arts are exhausting. I want my old Chad back.

By the time we pull into the driveway, mean old daddy takes over. "What are we doing here? Where have you brought me?"

"7757 Cranberry Court."

His face registers panic. "This is not 7757 Cranberry Court!" He jumps from the car and slams the door. He stands on the front lawn with hands on hips. He looks up at the house. He turns and looks at the other houses on our cul-de-sac. "Where the hell have you brought me? Just what are you trying to pull, lady?"

Our next-door neighbor Victor sees what's happening. Victor knows how to calm him. "Chad, can I have a word with you about this old magnolia tree?"

"Who the hell are you?"

"I really need your help, Chad. This thing is dripping seedpods like there's no tomorrow."

Victor redirects his attention to the tree that stands on the border between our front yards. "Look here at the mess this thing has made. I'd like to trim this tree, but I don't know how to do it without harming it."

Chad has given this advice a million times. He enters his groove: "First of all, you can't trim this kind of a tree in autumn. You've got to get up in there and thin the branches in early summer. That way you get plenty of blooms but fewer seedpods, follow me?"

"All right, so you're telling me I'm stuck with this mess."

"I'm telling you to get your rake out and just lean it against the fence there because you're going to be raking these suckers up for another month yet."

"Can I borrow your rake?"

"What do I look like, the hardware store?"

Victor takes gentle hold of Chad's shoulder. "I appreciate your help, old buddy. Let me know how I can return the favor."

"No trouble at all." Chad softens. "No trouble. But see that you clean them up because I don't want Charlie to eat those seeds."

"Charlie?" Victor glances back at me.

"He's a good old boy, our dog Charlie, but he can't help himself with those little red seeds," I say.

Victor nods.

"We're having soup and grilled cheese if you want some," Chad says, heading for the front door. I'm right behind him with the key. I mouth *thank you* to Victor, who watches until we get inside.

While I am in the kitchen putting the soup on the stove, Chad stands on the back porch and stares out at the pear tree. I can tell from the way he holds his body that he's remembered again. He's having his moment of clarity before the sundowning begins in earnest. Another hour will bring confusion and yet another hour hostility. Frankly the hostility is easier to take. When Chad falls into deep confusion, the extent of his loneliness frightens me. He's like a lost little boy who has given up on ever being found. When it strikes, his eyes turn hollow; his legs grow restless.

For now he stands firm, staring at the tree in the corner of our yard. Charlie is buried right there at the base of that tree. The same tree he lifted his leg against for 14 years. When Chad first retired, he poured all of his affection into that pup. They went everywhere together. Our youngest daughter Janie laughed when I told her that Charlie had eclipsed me in Chad's heart. I was not joking.

Chad lifts his gaze. The pale moon has appeared in the eastern sky. Like a ghost of its brighter presence in the dark, it hangs forlornly in the fading blue.

I stand next to Chad, sharing the moon with him. I take his hand. "He was a good old dog," I say.

He nods. "You got that right."

"You must be hungry after your walk."

"I'm making a wreck of everything, aren't I?"

"It's not your fault."

"I'm sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry for."

"Nevertheless…" He turns to face me. His eyes are filled with tears. He blinks, and they stream down his cheeks. This happens with some regularity now. "The kids are gone too, aren't they?"

"The kids are fine. They live in Seattle now. Julie and Janie. They'll

call us tonight. It's Thursday. They always call on Thursday evening."

"Thursday already."

I sing for him a line from one of his favorite songs: "Time is a jet plane; it moves too fast." His lips curl in vague recognition.

It is time for me to bring our daughters into this. I've been putting it off because I know the series of changes that follow will signal an end to our independence. I understand now what Chad's brother-in-law went through with his wife. I thought I knew at the time. But you don't really know a thing until you live it.

Our phone call this evening will not be as spontaneous as I'm making it sound. In fact, this will be the first of many video calls with Julie and Janie and Chad's doctor.

Chad lifts our intertwined fingers and examines them. "Whose hands are these? Look how gnarled and spotted and wrinkled they are."

"We're a couple of old farts, sweetie."

"Yesterday we were kids, you and me. One night after closing up the candy shop, we walked down to the beach. You were holding my hand then, too. I remember that moon. I remember us leaving our clothes in the sand and walking into the surf. I remember swimming naked in the moonlight with you. Was that a dream?"

"It was not a dream." I brush his hair back off his forehead.

"We were babies. What were we doing in the candy shop?"

"We worked there, silly. That night you were mopping the floor and I was closing out the cash register. I said to you, 'I feel like swimming.' And you said, 'It's not safe to swim at night.' And I said—"

"You said, 'It's not safe to swim *alone*.' It isn't either. You should never swim alone, especially at night."

He looks down at his crotch. "I've sprung a leak," he says.

He's pissed himself again. This too happens. Someday soon I will have to put him into diapers. And I will have to puree his food. And we will not have any more of these late afternoon moments of clarity. We will live in the fog, Chad and me. We will become Londoners, pulling our warm woolen caps down around our ears and fumbling our way along a gaslit path.

How do I know this? Chad's older sister lived four years with Alzheimer's. We watched it happen. Step by step. First the forgetfulness and the frustration. Then the denial. Then the wandering, which

effectively ends the denial. Followed by the confusion and the anger. The wrestling matches. The lockdown. The blank stare. Oblivion.

In the final year, his brother-in-law put Chad's sister in a secure memory care unit. Exhausted, he could no longer handle her. We visited often. After one particularly painful visit, Chad said to me, "They make a kit for farm vets who have to put down large animals. It's called Horse Death. It looks a bit like a road flare. It very humanely puts a bullet into the brain of the animal. If I ever look like my sister does today, I'm going to need you to put that gadget against my forehead one night as I'm sleeping."

As he holds our hands up between us, the loose sleeve of my sweater slips down to reveal the bruises on my forearm. Chad looks alarmed. He holds up my arm. He seems confused about what he is looking at. Then he places his hand over the biggest bruise. He sees that the purple-blue silhouette on my skin perfectly matches his fingers.

His face registers revulsion and then remorse. All at once he knows. He lets go of my arm and takes a step backward. He stumbles and falls to the grass. It's a soft slow-motion landing.

I try to stoop down to be with him, but I trip on his leg and tumble over next to him. Before I know what is happening, a burst of laughter flows out of me. My side aches a little. I've done something to my ribs. But I'm laughing and rolling a little on the lawn. Chad also begins to laugh. He is laughing and crying at once. What a sight we must be.

Victor calls out from the other side of the fence. "Everything OK over there?"

It takes a minute for me to gather myself and sit up. "We're fine, Victor, thank you. We're just having a moment here."

His head pops up over the top of the fence; he has mounted the step ladder that he keeps on his back patio. Chad and I are still giggling at each other like a couple of kids who have fallen off the merry-go-round.

Victor decides to play along. "Don't make me come over there!" he says. "When we moved in, the neighbors warned us about you two and your frolicking ways."

We lay together in the grass. It takes us a moment to catch our breath. Then we look over at each other and break out laughing again.

"I'm coming over," says Victor.

"No," Chad says.

"We're fine, Victor," I say. "Thank you, but we're fine. We're just going to lay here for a minute to catch our breath. We're just fine."

"Call out if you change your mind," he says, "I'm right here firing up the barbeque." His face disappears behind the fence.

"Here we are again under the moonlight," I say. "This will have to pass for swimming."

"We're swimming on land," Chad says, moving his arms in a breaststroke.

We turn to face one another. The laughter and the tears subside. We are breathing together side by side as we have breathed together in bed all these years. In my mind I'm anticipating his face in about an hour. I'm dreading the look of betrayal. I'm imagining the hatred he'll feel when he knows the jig is up.

"I'm afraid the soup is going to boil over," I say. "We'd better go in."

"Party pooper," he says.

"You change your pants while I put the soup on the table."

"I haven't made the grilled cheese sandwiches yet."

"I've got you covered, darling. Set up the checkerboard, why don't you?"

"I suppose I've told you how desperately I love you."

"I've never doubted it."

"Never do."

"Come on." I roll onto my side and get to my knees. "It'll be dark soon."

"You got that right."

"This face before me now," he says, "it's the same face of that girl who swam with me under the moonlight. I wish I could think of the thing I want to say to you."

"What, sweetie? What do you want to say?"

"I want…I don't know. I want you to know something. It's right here," he says, tapping his forehead. "I want to tell you…I want you to feel like I do when I look at you. Like…I can't find it. I can't find it."

I take his hands up to my lips.

"There's something in here. Something left to say. But I can't find it. I'm looking, goddamn it, but I can't…"

"It's time to go inside."

"It's gone. It's…you know how it happens. It just goes."

I take his face in both my hands and kiss his forehead. Judas kiss. And then I say, "Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change."

"Blah blah blah," he says. "Amen."

"Come on inside. It's getting cold." I tuck my arms beneath his arms and help him to stand. I feel a twinge in my ribs. "You get yourself dry. I'll put supper on the table." He wavers a bit, looking at the moon. "Maybe we'll call the kids. It's early yet. But we'll call the kids before they call us." I put my arm around his waist and turn us towards the slider. "It'll be good to hear their voices. Won't that be nice? Won't it be nice to hear what Julie and Janie have been up to this week? Come on inside now, love. Come in with me."

Christmas Night Mare | *Jean Lind*

You look behind my eyes for answers—
breast cancer's swollen arm
ready to burst the skin—

I know that you will be my truth teller.

"I should send a few Christmas cards.
Could you address an envelope?
I spent the last seven Christmases
alone.
Really not so bad.
Want to know the best one?
It was last year on Christmas Eve.
I went to my neighbor's barn
and nestled against a horse's warm body, stroking his neck.
He nuzzled me."

You ask for a pint of chocolate ice cream.

"Dish it all up.
Chocolate is pleasurable medicine
for my unbearable pain."

Then I offer my hand,
brushing pain down your arm, cupping a bone,
resting it on your head chakra.

Crossing a safe boundary, I suggest:
"Let's sweep life's pain out your arms and legs,
warm the bones where it is stored,
and let it rise and float away."

"Are you an angel?" you ask.

No.

I will be awake in the middle of the night
lying in the stall on Christmas Eve
with the steamy horse and you.

for Joan

The Mighty Bax | *Bob Dickerson*

Each ear is velvet like Jean-Paul's beret.
You see Simone smoothing the edges,
As the poets journey down the Rue du Mal
Snapping their fingers to the murmur of the crowds.
His tail is like a Georgia peacock,
Tied to a whipping post in Savannah,
Handing her finished story to the suits
Who couldn't care less about
Who winds up with the grandmother
Or whether the fat man pours the drinks before
Or after the kid burns down the Old Testament.
His piercing woof could wake an entire village.
It tells us the boots are coming, coming,
And it's the threadbare trees that long to sing.

Walter, Pierre, Tim, Howard | *Anthony Botti*

We had a good rain all night, their names crashing down
from the past. Thirty years later from up

here in the bedroom window, I see across the wide
lawn where everything in these gardens goes on
at such a fast pace…the lilacs,
peonies, roses. The new delight, purple phlox
blooming late in the cool mountain
air. For some time now I've not spoken

their names, young men who hungered
for the world they were losing, and what
in their leaving, they took. They died
without funerals. We gave away
their clothes to goodwill, all of them we outlived.
At the time did not know how much we had yet
to lose in the AIDS epidemic.

On this ordinary summer day, you and I surround
ourselves with a cabin in the woods, a pug
called Ernie, all tokens of permanency. What

forced me to remember their names last night?
I suppose because it would take a blunt
act of excision to forget. These decomposing

flower beds remind me that nothing in this world
keeps, nothing but my memory intact.
Soon it will be evening, time to turn
over the compost pile, their names taking root
in the fertile matter of our years alongside each other.

As the Torment of a Scorpion | *Sam Ambler*

My first encounter
with a scorpion,
I was a teenager
in a barn
on a kibbutz
in Israel.
I was in process
of picking up
a loose bale of hay
when I was stung
for my audacity.
I reached
recklessly
into its realm
and grabbed hold.
What did I expect?

I can't remember
what happened
to that scorpion—
I hope I stomped
the life out of it.
I felt its poison
immediately—
the pain, the swelling,
the numbness,
the sting
that sinks deeper
than any flesh wound.
It is this feeling,
this pain,
this fear
of unknowing,

this agony,
that comes back
when he is dead
by his own hand
without telling me
why;
without my sensing
its imminence.
The pain,
the numbness,
the sting.
He breaks
my heart
by stilling
his own.
In silence.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:NYE' LYN THO

A Sacred Beautiful Natural Heritage Hair: An African Diasporan Photo Exposé

"Natural Heir" is a visual pun and nod to the often-controversial move of people of the African Diaspora, especially women, embracing the natural state of our hair. I have photographed 15 subjects, studied their personality, observed their crowns and matched them to related plant life that historically represents African and African American culture. For instance, I replaced one subject's hair with cotton, another with collard greens, while one is adorned in calla lily, the national flower of Ethiopia.

In many cultures, hair is as important in self-identification as one's own name. In Africa, hair grooming and styling held and still holds a large role in displaying social status and identity. The natural elements that were used in African hair maintenance such as clay, mud, animal fat and plants are key in pushing the idea of rooting these plants and foods onto the subjects' heads via photo-manipulation.

I'm an Oakland-based portrait, commercial and conceptual photographer/retoucher. Prior to photography, I gained extensive experience retouching and compositing as a full-time graphic designer in a San Francisco–based company for seven years. My work is intimate as I like to get to know my subject and connect to them or it personally. Marrying the technical aspects of digital photography with the intimate intricacies of discovering one's true persona or constructing the visual brand is the key balance that drives my work.

I photograph the souls of my subjects. I also manipulate photos to be a bit more surreal in order to heighten or exaggerate the not so apparent story. Conscious of the widespread misrepresentation of people of color in mainstream American media, I aim to create powerful, beautiful, healing stories of and for my community.

NYE' LYN THO: Wild Sol photograph, 20" x 30", 2020

NYE' LYN THO: Cash Crop photograph, 20" x 30", 2015

NYE' LYN THO: Selassie photograph, 20" x 30", 2016

NYE' LYN THO: When They Say photograph, 20" x 30", 2017

NYE' LYN THO: Thought Seed photograph, 20" x 30", 2015

NYE' LYN THO: Kokobar photograph, 20" x 30", 2017

It Takes a Village | *McTate "Bean" Stroman II*

True village elder
She offered advice
and even shelter
The way she dressed
you saw her and if you
listened
You felt her

Her allure and appeal
Was dress how you
want to feel
She was radiant and bright
from head to toe
more than a glow
She harnessed the light

She spoke so sweet
and yet, so assertive
She was that place
you could lay your
burden
just like a Sunday
service

Yet you could call day
or night
a guiding light
full of love and insight
Not to mention a
wealth of parental
advice

Biologically she did
not have any
Yet truly a mother to
many
A loving daughter

A blessed sister
An amazing aunt
Beautifully, the
quintessential care
giver

Even colleges have
realized that
curriculums could
devise
around her philosophy
on how to preserve
family ties

Aunt Kitten, there is so
much more I can say
and there is so much
more you shall
continue to say
I am not hoping
I am open

True village elder
She offered advice
and even shelter
The way she dressed
you saw her
And if you listened you
felt her

Well It Is | *Nils Peterson*

The slow things making their slow way across the sidewalk
the worms, the slugs, the small bugs with short legs and small feet,
we'd like to help, but understand that help might prove fatal.
The best we can do is wish them well on their journey,
and wonder why the other side of the sidewalk should seem
so attractive. And then there's the beautiful little spider
in the middle of an enormous web just outside the doorway
where someone is sure to go, we wish it well, and yes, also
the fly she is trying to catch, we wish it well too, though
that makes life complicated. Well it is, in fact.

For Wang Lun | *Li Bai*

赠汪伦
李白

李白乘舟将欲行，
忽闻岸上踏歌声。
桃花潭水深千尺，
不及汪伦送我情。

While boarding a boat to leave,
I hear someone playing music on the riverbank.
The waters of Peach Blossom Lake are a thousand feet deep,
But not as deep as my love for Wang Lun.

Translated by Gary Young with Yanwen Xu

FROM THE ARCHIVES: INTERVIEW WITH GARY SNYDER

Conducted by De Anza Community College Students
Villa Montalvo, Saratoga, California
April 14, 2006

Front row, left to right: Rebecca MacFife, Linderpal Dhillon, Irene Lau (seated), Sarah Joy Callahan (seated), Theresa Because, Sabrina Din. **Back row, left to right:** Scott Lipsig, Wai Chau, Ken Weisner, Misty Dawn Shetler, Gary Snyder, Amie Barnes, James Schulte, Ken Fears, Emin Ismayilzada. **Not pictured:** Dan Snyder.

Villa Montalvo's Literary Events Series features readings and book signings year-round. Until around 2010, they also sponsored occasional meetings with guest authors specifically for De Anza students. These ninety-minute Q & A sessions provided students with the opportunity to dialogue with some of the best-known writers of our time.

Snyder, a continually groundbreaking American poet and Pulitzer Prize winner, read from his poetry collection, *Danger on Peaks*, at Montalvo on Thursday, Aptil 13th, 2006. Our students then interviewed Snyder the next morning, having prepared by reading and discussing *Danger on Peaks* as well as excerpts from *The Gary Snyder Reader* and Snyder's interview with Bill Moyers from *The Language of Life.*

IRENE LAU: *People always talk about a sense of belonging to their own country; however, in your own poems, like "Control Burn" and "For All," I realize that you're trying to foster a sense of belonging to the bioregion. In my opinion, to have a sense of belonging to the country is to become loyal and patriotic so that together we can contribute to the prosperity in many aspects of the country. On the other hand, to have a sense of belonging to the bioregion is to live at peace and harmony with the natural world, instead of exploiting the natural resources that are native to the land. So, do you think that it's important that we belong to both the country and bioregion as well?*

GARY SNYDER: What a great question. You know that really gets to the heart of a lot of questions, a lot of issues really, right there, that I've been working with for many years. So I really appreciate that. And you phrased it so concisely, very economically. Sense of belonging to a country, in our times, is what we call nationalism, maybe, patriotism sometimes, and it's a very, very tricky idea of identity, national identity for example. This is one of the major problems in the world today. If you look at it in historical perspective and anthropological perspective you realize that human societies and human groups evolved in different places, where in the beginning one's sense of identity was simply to "place." I am a person of this place and I am a person of this family or this clan. Maybe a little larger you might even say this village or this tribe. So all societies and all natural nations were originally bioregional. Bioregion is a useful, simple term that means bio: life, and region: a natural region. It means a natural region that can be defined by natural criteria. It's odd that we have to even explain this because the world is covered with natural regions. What's the problem then? The problem is that the contemporary world is divided up into nations which often do not follow natural regions.

IRENE LAU: *What are some examples of disjunctions between nations and cultures/bioregions?*

GARY SNYDER: Originally cultures and societies developed in terms of their natural regions. Your Chinese natural regions with two great watersheds and a couple of smaller, river watersheds had nothing to do with other kinds of boundaries.

Over centuries, we end up with national boundaries, because of the way history has worked. You look at the history of Europe, and the boundaries of the nations of Europe have changed every twenty or forty years, ever since the fall of the Roman Empire. Some more, some less. Eastern Europe and Central Europe have had very shaky boundaries, constantly changing. Great Britain only emerged after the English finally whooped the Scotch and

completed their invasion of Ireland. The Welsh, the Irish, and the Scots are still angry about it. So things don't get resolved easily.

There's a population in the borderline mountains between France and Spain which is still trying to accomplish its own bioregion identity and not to be considered members of either France or of Spain: the Basques, except they actually call themselves the Euskaldunak. There are a lot of known cases like that if you look, remnant populations. The Kurds are another that have a national sense of themselves, a linguistic sense of themselves and so forth. But they don't have boundaries of a nation. A "people" originally lived in a place where genetically, familially, clan-wise all together, they also more or less spoke the same language. Japan is one of the few places left on earth where everything is intact still. They all speak the Japanese language, with a few exceptions. They all have more or less the same genetic heritage. And they all still live within the same basic boundaries, the Japanese islands. That's a rare case. And even there the truth is the present Japanese population long ago was an invading population that drove out the earlier inhabitants we call the Ainu, who were not of the East Asian race, and the Japanese pushed them way up to the far north, where there still are a few people living in Hokkaido. There are Ainu place names still all over Japan, like Mount Fuji. Most Japanese people don't know that. The name Fuji is the name of the Ainu fire goddess. So there are a lot of things like that if you really dig into it. And then there's the Okinawan population. Okinawa is not the same language as Japanese. It's related to Japanese in the same way that Portuguese is related to Spanish; they are very close but can't understand each other.

IRENE LAU: *How do these overlaps and cultural mismatches relate back to the issue of bioregion—nature itself?*

GARY SNYDER: What's important is that we are aware of the natural features of the land we live in. If we forget that then we have forgotten some of the most important things there are. It doesn't matter what the name of your nation is or what its boundaries are, you can have any feeling you want toward that, you can be loyal to it or you can be critical of it depending on what it does and how you feel about it. But there's the other kind of patriotism which is loyalty to the country, the land itself. I am very critical of the politics of the United States of America. I am totally loyal to the North American continent. I am loyal to the Mississippi River and to the San Francisco Bay. It's important to make a distinction, even in your own mind, to say, "I can be critical of this society but I really truthfully want to see the land itself flourish." And that doesn't necessarily mean just being a hardcore

environmentalist, saying, "I've got to preserve this and I've got to preserve that." It means that you think about agriculture, you think about forestry, you think about water resources and air resources and you want them to go well.

Now, the truth is, if agriculture, forests, and air and water reserves go well, it benefits the economy—if the economy takes proper care of them. If the economy does not, why then you have to speak on behalf of the forest, rather than your economic interest: "I don't think you're doing the forest a good turn here. And that in truth means that you are ripping off the children of the future. It's temporal exploitation. Your grandchildren will not have the resources available to them that we have now, if we extract them all now." You have to think of the future.

IRENE LAU: *What are some ways you think of California's future in particular—in terms of both culture and environment?*

GARY SNYDER: Well, who does not think of the future? Modern people do not think of the future. Modern people are caught up in the four-year election cycle, and this year's programming on T.V., and often do not have a strong family consciousness. This is not to knock the American society—it has many wonderful features. I'm not talking about government or administration. The people themselves are a very interesting and mixed bunch, very diverse, with different languages now, but particularly we have Spanish and English strongly established in America. We might as well live with it—let's be bilingual, what's wrong with being bilingual? Everybody used to be bilingual, or trilingual, or quadrilingual. Where you are from, Irene, everybody is bilingual and probably trilingual, right? Most of the world's people speak two or three languages. It's just considered natural, and you have to do it. Everybody in Europe is trilingual. And if you want to get historical about it, a society that only speaks one language is very rare. California had about three hundred Native American languages—just California alone. So does that mean none of them could talk to each other? No. They were all bilingual or trilingual, and they all talked to each other. They could use sign language as well.

Bioregionalism is a little force that I've been part of, which is an educational undertaking to make people aware of where they live and what's in it. It's as simple as that. And to urge them to include that in their thinking and a little bit in their politics. As a poet I have spoken for the bioregion. I don't think of myself as a nature poet exactly but I've written nature poems. But my nature poems are precise to the question of what is there and what is being spoken of. What we call California—which is actually about three different places, rather than one place, if you go into

bioregional divisions—has a couple of unique features. One is that it has a summertime drought. So that makes it into what is known as a Mediterranean climate. If you live here on the edge of the ocean, under the shadow of the coastal range, you're not aware of that because you get the fog and the clouds coming over from the ocean during the summertime. This little coastal strip here is anomalous, it's not typical of the rest of the region. The rest of the region has a drought from May to November. Virtually no rain falls anywhere in the great Central Valley or the Sierra or in the interior mountain ranges. That dictates an entirely different kind of vegetation than you'll find anywhere in Europe, or even in New England and the Midwest. That's one of the bioregional characteristics of California; it's a summer drought climate. And all of the vegetation has responded to that point. Also, that totally saves the agriculture and the agricultural economy. Without the Sierra Nevada, which is the big snow collector up there, there would be no agriculture at all in the greater Central Valley. The greater Central Valley is a desert; it only gets about thirteen inches of rain a year.

Knowing how much rain a year you get is bioregional knowledge. When I go somewhere the first thing I ask the guy who picks me up at the airport is "How much rain do you get here a year." Some of them know, some of them don't. Sacramento gets thirteen inches. Where I live, we get forty inches at three thousand feet. At seven thousand feet it gets eighty inches. So it's an elevation thing. The eighty inches fall as snow. The summer snow melt is what gives California agriculture, through irrigation. And it is favorable to Mediterranean agriculture practices. It's no accident that there are all these Italians and Swiss-Italians and Portuguese people growing grapes up there at the north end of San Francisco Bay. They knew what to do. It's no accident that there are all these Armenians that are making raisins down around Fresno, and so forth. All of these crops are specifically brought over by people who had crop knowledge from other places. It's a wonderful history actually; it's a really interesting history. Chinese-American farmers, Japanese-American farmers, people from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece—they did a whole lot of things all over California that you might forget about nowadays. They really shaped what the agriculture of this state could be. And I still think California agriculture is far more interesting than California information technology [laughs]—which you could do anywhere.

OK, so you can be a patriot but you can also be a matriot [laughs]. Patriot from patriarchal, and matriot from matriarchal. So a matriot loves the motherland, and the motherland is the land.

LINDERPAL DHILLON: *In your essay, "The Place, the Commons and the Region," you have mentioned the importance of preserving our own environments and*

practicing a profound citizenship in both the natural and the social worlds. How do you practice bioregionalism in your own life and art and to what end?

GARY SNYDER: Your question continues from what Irene has been asking and I can answer that very easily, having already given the full preface [everyone laughs]. I live in a high forest fire zone, in the forest surrounded by trees for hundreds of miles. So one of my specifically bioregional activities is reducing forest fire hazard by cutting out the underbrush and thinning, which is what we all do up in the Sierra Nevada. I have chainsaws and various tools and I rope in neighbors and my sons, and my step-daughter, who is pretty good with a chain saw, and we go out and do that kind of work.

I also do the educational work. For example, when mountain lions and bears moved back into our country fifteen years ago (before that there weren't so many) and started scaring people, we held workshops on how to live with mountain lions and how to live with bears, and not get buried with them and not be too afraid. That's a little bioregionalism local exercise. In the discussion of native plants and invasive or introduced plants, there are some introduced plants that we don't want to have around; it is possible to encourage the use of native plants in various ways. These are all simple things to do but they're also quite educational. Those are some of the things I've been doing.

SARAH JOY CALLAHAN: *I was at the reading last night. I enjoyed it a lot. One thing you mentioned was how long it takes to write a poem. You said two to five minutes and then you're done. So what I want to know is after you've done that two to five minutes of just writing, how long does it take for you to revise a poem once that process begins?*

GARY SNYDER: You know some poems you finish right away. You write it, you look at it and say that's done.

SARAH JOY CALLAHAN: *But are there some poems that you never revised?*

GARY SNYDER: Yeah, there are a few. In fact I wrote one that I never revised just about three weeks ago. It's called "Fixing the System." It's very short so I'll recite it to you.

Fixing the System
Under the topless, bottomless,
empty blue sky
on my hands and knees,
looking down a little hole
leaky gate-valve
drip, drip, drip

Some poems take a long time to finish, so I have a little system of putting them in folders and looking at them after a few weeks or months. Eventually, after a few years if I haven't been able to figure out what that poem or what that language does, or what to do with it, maybe I throw it away. But I'll wait a while to see if I can finish it. So, it was kind of a joke to say it only takes three to five minutes to write a poem. Your mind is ready, that's the thing. The first part of it is just having an open mind and listening to interesting language, interesting images, little insights, little pictures. And then maybe write a little of that down and then keep it around and come back to it. So how do you know you're doing that well? It helps to have read a lot of poetry so that you don't reinvent the wheel. It would be really stupid to try and build a house without learning something about carpentry. So just know what other people have done. There've been some great poets out there, great singers, and writers. Just read a lot, because you're using language. The tool of poetry is language—the material of poetry is language. So be acquainted with what people do with the language, have done with the language. It's fascinating.

SCOTT LIPSIG: *How did Buddhism and meditation shape your role as a poet and what does it mean to you as a person? Moreover, what should it mean to others?*

GARY SNYDER: Well, I've been interested in Buddhism ever since I was a teenager, and what drew me to it first was its ethical position. I was very sensitive and favorable to the natural world when I was young growing up on this little farm north of Seattle, and was learning all I could about the work there and the wildlife. And it wasn't that I didn't do a little hunting or fishing—I did—but even when I did hunt, I really tried to think about what the right attitude is when you hunt, and how do you express your gratitude. I learned something about that from the Native American studies, too.

I developed from that an appreciation of Buddhist ethics, which are sensitive to all living beings, and to put it very simply and bluntly, the Ten Commandments says, "Thou shalt not kill." That applies only to human beings. The Buddhist and Hindu precept is called *Ahimsa* in Sanskrit; it means not harming, and it is generally interpreted to mean not killing, and it applies to all living beings. So when I learned that—I read it somewhere when I was fifteen or so—I said that made sense so what's wrong with those Christians and Jews and Muslims? Don't they realize there's the rest of nature in there, too? Not considering the rest of nature—I think that's kind of an incomplete ethics. I paid attention to whatever I could run across about Buddhism after that and have studied it all my life and appreciated it all my life. It's low-key and also totally realistic in the sense that it says, "The

nature of this world is impermanence. We live in impermanence. You and everyone else are going to die."

The Tibetans have a little thing called the Three Reminders: *death is real, it comes without warning, this body will be a corpse*. So, how do you work with that? That's part of the Buddhists' question. The thing is, they work with this idea of impermanence and being absolutely realistic about the inability to make long-term projects that will last, and to be good-hearted about it. Because in truth, when you can accept that and give up on trying to create purpose around yourself, you feel liberated. People I met in California and also in Asia that were practicing Buddhists were very sweet people with very deep cultural ideas. My wife, who is a terminal cancer case, has lived already three or four years longer than the doctors gave her and they are taking care of her now, and when she'll die we don't know. Next week? Or six months from now? It's really hard to guess. She handles that very beautifully because she's Japanese-American and grew up as a Buddhist in the San Joaquin Valley, and her upbringing just gave her this great trust in the world. She says, "I trust the universe to do what it's supposed to do with me. I'm not going to fight with it, I'm not going to say I'm fighting against cancer." She says, "I'm sharing my body with cancer." She's says that's the way it's going to be. She is quite elegant in how she handles that, and that is kind of the way those Buddhists teachings can help you.

SABRINA DIN: *In your piece in* Danger On Peaks *titled "After Bamiyan" you describe the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues. It seems to me that they no longer had a chance to speak when they were destroyed. It feels like poetry is often a voice for the silenced. Through some of your poetry, are you speaking for them? What are they (and you) saying?*

GARY SNYDER: I guess I am, I hadn't thought of it that way, thank you. To write or to speak, or to tell the story of something, anything, is also to speak for it, and to tell the story so that that story is not lost and maybe becomes part of what the world thinks. I would say in one sense the great Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley don't need me to speak for them. They were so appreciated for so long, for so many centuries, so many travelers and writers saw them, so many pictures were taken and drawings were made. They were totally studied by art historians and cultural historians from all over the world, and they made a complete record of how many there were, how they were built, everything. Yet, there's still part of the story to be told, which was the story I told in my poem, about the way several different people reacted to it. A Buddhist friend I thought reacted very frivolously to

it. Christopher Hitchins, a neoconservative writer who used to be with *The Nation*, reacted in a strangely cantankerous way based on his ideological antireligious position. I made the connection in passing between the destruction of the Bamiyan statues and the World Trade Center, and I did that quite subtly. I didn't make a big issue out of it, but it's worth to see those two side-by-side, so that's what I did. I never got to the Bamiyan, but I will go there, it is my hope to get there. I traveled a lot in India and a little bit in Afghanistan.

THERESA BECAUSE: *I come across the term "the real work" in your poem named "I Went into Maverick Bar." To you, doing the real work seems to be a natural gift for you as you said in the interview with Moyers, that the conviviality between you and the natural world is a gift to you from childhood. Clearly, many of us are not born with that gift. What could we do in our schools or educational philosophies to create more adults who understand what "the real work" is, against only doing work that brings about material gain, self-advancement, pleasure and convenience at the expense of higher values? I think we all agree that the youth are our foundation for a better tomorrow in this world. In your poetry, do you intend to reach out to the youth and create awareness? If so, what age do you feel is appropriate to introduce your ideas and how do you feel your work influences our youth?*

GARY SNYDER: I don't think about that type of thing much. Not quite like that, anyway. I do write poetry in what we would call Standard English. I choose to. We all have a choice, what level of language we write in. I tend to write toward the simplest and clearest language I can. It's not like I deliberately said, "what level of difficulty do I want to write in so that everyone can understand me," but I like the possibilities of clarity that you find in the English language, and its directness, its kind of oneness that's possible there. I like to think that most ordinary people can mostly follow what I write, and that distinguishes it from some sets of contemporary poetry, which are grammatically and in terms of vocabulary more educated and more complex. I only use more educated language when that's my choice, but if there's a simple way to say something, I'll say it simply. I'm not thinking about generation or age level, though. I think I'm probably speaking to peers, more or less, although I've worked on tankers and in logging, so I know how to talk to everybody.

THERESA BECAUSE: *Do you go back in and look at your poems in reflection and think how it could affect youth?*

GARY SNYDER: Not too consciously. As somebody who's read a lot and done a lot, when I write something, I'll say, "Oh, that'll work. Oh, okay, this'll

reach out there." I can tell that in some cases better than in other cases. Like when I wrote a thing called "The Smokey the Bear Sutra," changing Smokey the Bear into some kind of ancient stone-age Buddha bear figure, I said this is funny. It can be used to catch people off guard. But the forest service never has figured out what to do about it. Strictly speaking, they can sue me. I found out that they copyrighted Smokey the Bear. But one approaches these things first and foremost as an artist. My sense of responsibility is first to the product. To make whatever point has been given to me as good as I can make it. After I've done that I say, well, who's this for? And maybe it's not for everybody, but maybe some of them are for a lot of people. But you choose the art first. You're not writing like you're an ad copywriter, saying, "Will this reach a lot of people?" You don't do that.

WAI CHAU: *The earth is a precious gift for human beings, and as everyone knows we should all protect this little planet we have. But so often environmental protection can be difficult because of people's selfishness and the high cost; for example not everyone can afford a hybrid car or a solar house, and public transportation can be impractical on many occasions. So what do you suggest to help motivate everybody to help protect the environment?*

GARY SNYDER: See, this is a political question. This is a question about "what would I do if I ran the government?" You're asking me to suggest major public policy, and I have a few ideas about those things like everyone else, but as a poet it's not my responsibility to make public policy, unless I feel I have an expertise toward that. What I can say is that sure, there's a lot of economic inequality in this society, and in many societies, and in other societies. What should we do? We should not forget Karl Marx. Marxism, Marxist thought, has a very sophisticated, developed basis of history. It may not provide solutions, or political solutions that we might like, but it is a very good critique of how history has been dominated by the struggle between poor people and rich people, and how these things are still with us; they have not been resolved. So Marxist economic historical thinking is one thing that should not be forgotten. It's not forgotten in Europe. It's not forgotten in Asia. But in the United States it's forbidden to talk about it, except in a few universities. So that would be one basic, simple thing.

Another basic, simple thing is, if you're interested in these things, learn about banking. Learn about the stock market. Understand how it works, not necessarily as a critic, just understand how it works. What goes on? These are what you might call the Despised Mysteries. I just finished doing my taxes. We are surrounded by networks of power and money, which we prefer not to know about. But those who do know about it, they clean up

like gangbusters. They walk away with the store, which is a way of saying, if you learn about these things, you can be rich. So that's the other choice. Anybody taking any classes in accounting? Accounting is a good career.

[Emin Ismayilzada asks Snyder to read a poem—"Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout"—which he does]

EMIN ISMAYILZADA: *I am from Azerbaijan, and in our culture, we are taught to imagine. In your poems, like the one you just read, I can see what you are saying. What is the difference between seeing and imagining? Does poetry help readers to see or to imagine?*

GARY SNYDER: As I understand it, Azerbaijan has a great tradition of oral narrative, singing, dancing, and chanting for hours. I love it. Central Asia has a great tradition still of storytelling, chanting, and poetry, just like Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. They were long, oral, metrical chanted texts, but not texts. Before writing, they were part of the oral tradition, and later committed to writing in the Greek language. There's a book on this subject called *The Singer of Tales* about the connection between ancient Greek epic poetry and the poetic traditions of Central Asia and the south Slavic countries as well. They were, of course, narratives and often grounded in mythology, very much works of the imagination. Poetry and creative writing, creative literature in general, draw on the imagination.

There are great imaginary points in the English language: William Blake's mythical long poems. John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which is totally a work of the imagination, based on both Dante and the Old Testament. What we call the lyric poem was written to be sung accompanied by a lyre, a little string instrument, originally. These shorter poems, the lyric poems, are always written in direct observation, as the longer poems are really works of the imagination. You can roughly divide it that way. I've written both, in both forms. I was particularly influenced by Chinese poetry, which is short poems, and almost entirely based on observations of the natural world. Japanese poems are very much so also. They're little bits of the world. but they also have ideas in them: "*Tsuyu no ya wa / tsuyu no yo nagara / sari nagara*"—"This dew drop world / this impermanent world / is but another drop" [Issa]. It's just that and yet, still, it's something else. So that is observation, but it's still complex thinking. It's a complex philosophical proposition that really throws you back on yourself. So that's all just energy. For example, I wrote *Myths & Texts*, which is largely a work of the imagination. I wrote *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, which is a sequel to *Myths & Texts*, which is again a work of the imagination, but at other parts, they're more observation. I enjoy doing both. I think it's just great to write

prose. I also write essays; I find it purely satisfying to write prose, and it's also very satisfying to write poetry. Writing a good sentence, any sentence, is very satisfying. So don't feel hampered by what is possible, just do whatever you feel like.

DAN SNYDER: *I'm in PR, as part of the great California tech machine, at a small company called Intel. I'm getting into writing, and I'm frustrated with my angst and my issues with technology and what it's doing to the world. It seems like in your work, you don't take a lot of shots at political things or what technology's doing or a lot of things other artists do. What kind of advice would you have for someone who has a lot of things they're feeling? Would it be something to write about, or do you think it's not important to take shots at the issues or talk about what you see happening?*

GARY SNYDER: To critique.

DAN SNYDER: *Yes, and I'm not saying all technology's evil.*

GARY SNYDER: Yeah, I really like bicycles. [Laughter] Gandhi said before World War II, "I'm not really as much against technology as people say. I own a bicycle." That's a certain level of technology you can't beat. A lot can be said for tools, and the right tool for the right job. To critique something in general, where you put it out as an argument, where you enter into a dialogue. You make it possible for people to respond to you, to answer

back, to say, "I question that." Poetry, when you start being critical, is more rhetorical, which I don't like. It's more screaming at. Robert Bly wrote a powerful poem against the Vietnam War that he read at a lot of colleges during the war. It's called the "Tooth Mother Naked At Last," and it was about how America had revealed itself as the mother who eats her own children. That was a little extreme, but it was very enthusiastically received in its own time. But no one remembers it anymore. I think in a larger time frame, I'm not postmodern, I'm not modern, I'm premodern; I think in premodern terms, which means I think 10,000 years back and I think 10,000 years ahead, and I've been able to do that by working more with bioregional ideas than with political ideas, knowing how long an ice age lasts, knowing how long it takes for a type of botanical succession to take place. And knowing a little bit about human history. I mean long human history. I mean really long human history.

I visited caves in southern France about ten years ago that had these extraordinarily wonderful paintings of cows on the wall. They were 35,000 years old. They were really good artists 35,000 years ago, and also, they were exactly the same human beings as we are: big skulls, totally intelligent, very handy, lots of tools, great artists, probably great storytellers. We don't know a whole lot about them, but we do know now that Cro-Magnon and upper Paleolithic human beings were hardly at all different from us; if anything they have slightly larger brains. That's true, on the average. So an artist's work is to be under the radar and to hopefully, truthfully, honestly, deeply help people with their lives and help the society with its life, and that's one job.

There are other jobs. There are the jobs of day-to-day critique; I subscribe to several magazines, and every week they are coming up with analyses on the errors of the current administration, the military flaws of Iraq and Afghanistan, and so forth. Well I appreciate those critiques. I don't do it myself because I'm not expert enough, but I learn from them and I also try to learn from the defenders. I read some right-wing stuff from time to time just to get the other position. So one can do that, but maybe to some degree it's some type of good sense not to try to do things I can't do. So I can't change public policy. Your work as a PR guy is not something I would dismiss either. I would look at it professionally, and professionally say, "how can I reach and convince people without telling lies?" There are a few Buddhist ethical rules; one rule is try not to harm things, another is don't tell untruths, another is don't take things that have not been given to you. Another is, be careful about getting intoxicated! And another is, be careful about how you use sex, and be sure that it's loving. Pretty basic. I like most

of the Ten Commandments. There's only one Commandment I don't like: Thou shalt have no other God before me. Now wait a minute. What's wrong with this guy? Is he so insecure? I mean, can't I think a little bit about other gods?

MISTY DAWN SHETLER: *Hi Gary, I'm nervous.*

GARY SNYDER: Hi Nervous. [Laughing]

MISTY DAWN SHETLER: *My name is Misty and I have been a fan since the early '80s, so it's really cool to be here now. I know a lot of writers go on walks, a kind of walking meditation, as a way to connect to the sacredness of it all. It helps them to open up their subconscious and connect to ideas and encourage the flow of inspiration. As a Buddhist, do you find sitting or walking meditation helps you to write? What other sort of things help to get your creative juices flowing?*

GARY SNYDER: I love walking, and I walk a lot; I always have. I don't ever meditate, however, thinking about poetry or thinking about creativity. The kind of meditation that I do, and the way I was taught, in Zen, is not directed toward any goal. It's goal free, so that you can simply see what your mind is doing at that time, at that day, what your feelings are. It's more basic than writing. It's like where the hell am I? And who and what am I right now at this moment? And then letting it come to you, and observing without judgment, observing what thoughts arise and pass by without judging them. Neither good nor bad. I have never found myself even close to thinking up poems while meditating. And it's not even that I made myself do that, it just never came to me. It's curious. Walking is sometimes meditation, but generally it is more like reflections. It's a little distinction there between reflecting and meditating. Reflecting is fun too. And reflecting—which means more directed examination of thoughts, memories and going over what you did again, and what somebody else said—all of that comes up a lot while walking, as well as just plain observing and seeing as you go. Walking is very much tied to the breath, obviously. There are some wonderful essays on walking; it is one of the great human activities. It is the human way to move around and get places; we ought to do it more—we ought to walk a lot. We would all be happier and healthier if we walked a lot. So we've lost something that is very precious, really. Our bodies were made to walk, that's why we have these big fat legs. And it's only a hundred years ago, or a hundred and fifty years ago, that people quit walking, and they still do it in some parts of the world. So, Henry David Thoreau wrote a fine essay, "Walking," and Rebecca Solnit (she is a really splendid writer who lives in San Francisco and she's been publishing a lot of books lately) wrote

a book called *Wanderlust*, which is all about walking and is quite good. I'm working on an essay myself on walking that will be part of a book about Mount Tamalpais, which is a place that we've walked a lot.

JAMES SCHULTE: *The first time I ever heard about you was yesterday, so I wanted to ask you what you would say to somebody who has never read any of your poetry? What would you say your poetry is about, and what do you try to convey in your poetry?*

GARY SNYDER: My poetry is about work, love, and nature. I try to convey a sense of affection and gratitude to the world. For someone who's never read my poetry, start with *Riprap*. That's pretty basic. Kenneth Rexroth was one of the great poets of the '40s and '50s in San Francisco who nobody remembers much anymore, and somebody asked him why he wrote poetry. He said, "to overthrow the state and seduce women." People used to talk that way. They don't anymore.

KEN FEARS: *You say you derive inspiration from nature. How would you contrast city life with nature?*

GARY SNYDER: Using nature in its most basic sense, which is the phenomenal world, the subject matter of science is nature. Science studies physical phenomena and the rules by which it operates. By that definition, cities are natural, and that's the definition I like to use. They're not wild, but they're natural. Make a distinction between wild nature and nature in general. To say nature inspires me is to say the phenomenal universe inspires me, and probably the spiritual universe does too. Any universe will do that we're present in. I have written a couple of really fun poems about cities, including one about New York City, Manhattan, called "Walking the New York Bedrock," which is all about walking around in New York City. I don't have anything against cities, except that they're not enough like cities. They should be more like cities are, and they'd be better. That is to say, more crowded in, tighter, more walking space, less suburbs around them, the way old-time cities used to be. And then lots of neighborhoods, lots of congeniality, lots of friendship, and public transportation. Los Angeles doesn't make it as a city; it's too spread out, and you have to have a car. So that's not a good city. London is a great city.

AMIE BARNES: *As someone who considers herself an environmentalist and an avid reader and writer, your writings combine my two favorite passions of nature and language. I have always felt that these disciplines are complexly intertwined. In your writings, both "Riprap" and "Claws/Cause" address this relationship between the natural world and language, which man created. What do you feel the*

relationship is between the two? "Riprap" was included in your first book of poetry in 1959, while "Claws/Cause" is in your most recent collection, Danger On Peaks *(2004). Have you noticed any evolution of this phenomenon? Have your own feelings about this relationship [between language and nature] changed in the forty-five years between the poems?*

GARY SNYDER: The relationship between nature and language. I've written about that in some of the essays in my book of essays called *Practice of the Wild*. I'm not so sure that language is so different from nature. There's been a lot more study of the larger territory of what we might think of as language, which is science symbiotics, especially among animals and insects, in the last 45–50 years since I first started studying language. Studies show that we aren't aware of elaborate and sophisticated communication systems in the natural world, in the nonhuman world, the language of bees and how bees communicate by dancing, using language through the sign system. Human language, I now believe, is biological, that we are hard-wired from birth to be able to learn a language, that our nervous system skillfully picks up, memorizes, internalizes, and becomes capable of using the language that it is raised with from the age of one on. Whatever language you are hearing in the first five years of your life you'll learn, and you'll learn it very well. And by the time you're five years old, you will have completely learned that language. Completely except for additional vocabulary.

The important part of it is all structure and grammar, and if you've internalized the structure and grammar, you can create proper sentences. You know intuitively the difference between an improper and a proper sentence. Now that is a remarkable accomplishment that everybody does. And it is after that, from the age of five on, that what we do with language is more affected by culture: our talk is polite or impolite in language, and what people think beautiful language is—and what people think less beautiful language is—begins to emerge. All of that stuff, including literature and so forth, comes later. But the basic material of sentence production and internalized syntax comes to you absolutely naturally. However, as they have just learned, if you don't learn language by exposure to people speaking language like your parents by the time you're eight or ten, you lose it; it's very hard to learn a language. There are some very sad cases of children that were locked up and kept by themselves by crazy parents or something, for ten or twelve years and then finally discovered and finally treated, as they are permanently damaged by that inability to learn language when they were ready to learn language. So in essence, language is part of our biological heritage. Dogs can learn about a hundred words. I have an adult female standard poodle. She is so smart, and she knows a lot of words. If

I'm going to go for a walk I have to say I'm going for a W-A-L-K or the dog will go get the leash and stand there, waiting to go with me. So, those are really interesting questions about those relationships.

REBECCA MACFIFE: *I can't imagine the mind of a poet ever stopping for sleep: how do night dreams impact your poetry—or does your poetry impact them?*

GARY SNYDER: I don't know if they impact my poetry. I've never made a big issue out of dreams in my life, personally. I have friends who are followers of Jungian psychology, and I like Jung's writings, and I've studied Jung, but I've never particularly been inclined to pay too much attention to my dreams, except when they really force themselves on me and are so vivid, then I do look at those. But again, they don't get into poems as such, I don't think. Obviously I can't speak entirely about my own work, because I do things that I don't understand. There's a lot I don't understand about my own work. I just trust it, that's all.

KEN WEISNER: *Thanks again, Gary, for taking the time to speak so generously with us—and for giving each of us the chance to ask a question. We have some cards for you, and Misty made an origami paper crane for you and your wife, on behalf of all of us, wishing her well.*

GARY SNYDER: Thank you; I've enjoyed being with you. [Students and Snyder clap for each other.]

BARBARA LAWRENCE ART

Barbara Lawrence was born in San Francisco and spent her early years walking the hills and beaches, exploring the parks and museums and sailing on San Francisco Bay, all the time absorbing the rich visual information that later became her paintings. Barbara is inspired by the rich tapestry of life in the Monterey Bay area and paints both on location and in her studio. She is currently painting full time in her studio in Santa Cruz. Her work is characterized by rich color and sensuous paint application and is in many private collections throughout the U. S. and Europe. The color and light of California, in the foothills and fields, on the coast and in the Sierras are her source material. Her work is characterized by recognizable subject matter with an interpretation that synthesizes the essence of the subject with qualities of abstraction. Her work includes figurative and landscape paintings.

BARBARA LAWRENCE: Antonelli's Pond oil on canvas, 36" x 36"

BARBARA LAWRENCE: Baker Beach oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

BARBARA LAWRENCE: November Slough oil on canvas, 24" x 24"

BARBARA LAWRENCE: Windblown Cypress oil on canvas, 24" x 26"

House Edge | *Ralph James Savarese*

It's hard to walk away from a winning streak.
—Cara Bertoia, *Cruise Quarters*

The trees shimmy
in the breeze.
We need a new
word for what
the leaves
are doing—the way
the light catches
them as they
descend: part
sequins, part sequence.
The former comes
from the French
for coins.
What shiny tender!
The latter
from the Latin
for answering verses.
He goes after; she
goes under.
The Ginkgo's
a slot machine,
and old man grief
has won.

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SULLIVAN

RED WHEELBARROW: *David, congratulations on your new book from The Word Works,* Black Butterflies Over Baghdad*. The book is comprised mostly of your own poems about the impact and aftermath of the Iraq War on the people of Iraq, and also features 21 translations of nine living Iraqi poets both in-country and in diaspora—as well as ekphrastic poems introducing readers to a new generation of Iraqi artists responding to war trauma and societal fracture. That's a lot—130 pages to be exact—of poetry. What a remarkable book!*

For readers who have yet to learn about your work, let me also mention that in addition to having published several books of your own poetry, you've also published When Bombs Have Not Breakfasted Yet*, a collection of poems by Iraqi poet Adnan al-Sayegh, co-translated with Dr. Abbas Kadhim, as well as* Every Seed of the Pomegranate *(2012, Tebot Bach) which took on the Iraq War from both American and Iraqi perspectives. So you've been confronting American imperial practices and exploring Iraqi perspectives for the better part of two decades now.*

Would you please tell us just an overview about two things: remind us how you began this work, and how did you then evolve into becoming a busy translator—or "co-translator," as you term it—of new poetry from Iraq? Those are cultural and aesthetic journeys I'll bet you couldn't have predicted for yourself 20 years ago.

DAVID ALLEN SULLIVAN: Thank you for creating the time and space to have this discussion. I appreciate how *Red Wheelbarrow* continues to tackle tough subjects, and give voices to many in this world. *Black Butterflies Over Baghdad* is about dialogue and discussion—both in its creation, and in its reception. Sometimes the poems are explicitly in dialogue, and sometimes implicitly with the people represented, the stories they told me, or the artwork or photographs or videos they shared. Hopefully, the reader will feel compelled to dig deeper and look up the poets, artists, and historical events that are referenced in its pages.

Strong-Armed Angels was my first book, and much more personal; however, it includes a sequence about a friend of mine who took his own life, Bill Milestone, who was an ex-marine, and the book wrestles with his—and others'—deaths. At the time, I was teaching the epic of Gilgamesh in one of my classes, the oldest continuous narrative in existence. It is focused on the friendship between an overbearing king and a wild man who was created by the gods in response to the elders' pleas from the city of Ur, in the area now called Iraq. Enkidu is created out of the mud, runs with the animals, and has to be "civilized" before he can meet Gilgamesh. They wrestle, become friends, and then embark on a series of quests. When the gods take Enkidu's life in lieu of Gilgamesh's, he's distraught, and the last half concerns his surrealistic travels through the underworld to try to bring his friend back. I asked my students to write an essay about someone they'd

lost. A number of military veterans from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq wrote movingly about comrades who'd died during combat, and one wrote about an Iraqi interpreter whom he'd grown close to who was assassinated. I realized how little I knew about these wars except for what I gleaned from the news, but rarely was it personal. Some of the students were willing to talk to me, educate me, and I began to dive into the novels, poetry, memoirs, documentaries, and films that dealt with these issues.

RW: *How did the first poems emerge from these thoughts, readings, and experiences?*

DAS: A poem in the voice of an angel came to me one night, commanding me to go deeper, and to be willing to be burnt by the experiences. My poetry group read that poem, asked where it'd come from, and when I said it came to me and I don't take credit for it, they said: *Well it sounds like you're not done yet.* I began to write poems based on what my veteran students had said. When Brian Turner came to do a reading at Bookshop Santa Cruz, you and I took him out for beers afterwards. I told him what I'd been doing, confessed my fears about having not been to Iraq, having no direct connection to the military, and not speaking Arabic. He said, *If the poems are coming to you, you have a duty to write them down. Too few citizens are paying attention to what's happening in this country, and to what soldiers are suffering. We have living bombs walking among us, and we don't even recognize them, or listen to their stories.*

I continued on my trajectory, but soon realized I had to also tell the Iraqi side. It was harder to find info, but social media, blogs, and recently translated work allowed me inroads into the myriad cultures of Iraq, and connected me to some of its people. By the time *Every Seed of the Pomegranate* was finished, half the poems were in the voices of US soldiers and citizens, half in the voices of Iraqi soldiers and citizens, with five angels serving as a kind of chorus. They function as a bridge, since the Arabic named angels in the Qu'ran are the same as those mentioned in the Bible.

I felt an Iraqi poet should write a blurb for the book, and Adnan al-Sayegh, who'd emigrated to London, agreed. Soon after, he told me my book haunted him, and he hoped I'd work with his translator on perfecting the English language version of his selected poems. I agreed, and met Abbas Kadhim, who was living in San Jose at the time. Our co-translation project culminated in *Bombs Have Not Breakfasted Yet*, which was published by the London-based Iraqi Arts Council.

RW: *But somehow this was only the beginning of many further projects related to the war and its aftermath. You've sustained and embraced this work for 15 years now.*

DAS: I thought I was done—dealing with the war, even in imagination, was exhausting—but Iraqi poets and artists began to approach me and ask if I would write about their work, or co-translate their writings. I don't know how adept I am at creating poems that capture something of the original, but the process educates me, and exposes me to voices and styles far from my own. Their poems often take wild, imaginative leaps, have a black sense of humor about awful events, and use repetition and refrains in a remarkable way.

I hadn't realized how much art books have become part of Iraqi artists' output until I visited MOMA's PS1 exhibit of art about the Gulf War and the Iraq War with the poet Faleeha Hassan. I saw many art books there, and some were wrapped in barbed wire, shot by bullets, or combined writing and sculpture. One of them was by Ghassan Ghaib, who created the painting on the cover of my book. I began to read more, and found that during the sanction years artists often turned to creating these books because all kinds of material could be incorporated and they were easily transported. I actually created one myself, which is part of Beau Beausoleil's *Al Mutanabbi Street Starts Here* project. It consists of a burned copy of *Every Seed of the Pomegranate*, with a poem I'd written about the car bombing in Baghdad, and facing it is the Arabic translation, suspended on wires with the two halves open, like wings. I actively began to seek out contact with poets and artists, and to try to understand the protests roiling the cities of Iraq.

Young Iraqis began to show me photographs of the protests in Tahrir Square in Baghdad; they talked about what they'd seen, and told me they were rising up against the corrupt series of governments, the interference of both the US and Iran, the artificial and exaggerated conflicts between Sunni and Shiite, the treatment and repression of women, and the need to create a new country they could be proud of. Poems about these events began to appear alongside the co-translations, and all these pieces began to feel like they belonged together in a book, so *Black Butterflies Over Baghdad* is assembled like a butterfly. The body in the center consists of 21 co-translations of nine Iraqi poets, both young poets still in Iraq, and older poets of the diaspora. Flanking them are two long sequences, which are kind of like legs, and the largest sections on either side are the wings—the first portrays Iraq post–US invasion, and second shows Iraq in the throes of the ongoing protests. The activism of the young Iraqis moves me because they believe they can create a new country on the ashes of the one they grew up in.

RW: *In* Black Butterflies Over Baghdad*, one is moved by the compassion and sort of "full crossings" you make into the Iraqi worlds and stories and voices the work*

inhabits. At times we feel that we are reading a kind of documentary poetry—a report in lyric form of images, narratives, even videos of life both during and after the war. You are cataloguing the day-to-day costs. At other times, we are whisked into urgent attempts at healing. Contrast for us, for example, the prose poem "Lost/Found" and the lyric "Beekeeper, Sulaymaniyah."

DAS: As I've worked on these poems I felt that the voices in them should be predominant, not my characteristic moves and displays of language, so I use multiple forms and voices. A prose poem like "Lost/Found" felt like the only way to express—in unflorid simple diction—the heart-rending story told to me by Yousif al-Timmimi, a former Iraqi translator for the American forces, and later Human Rights Watch, whom I visited in Salt Lake City, where he now lives with his family. I'd tried it first with line breaks, but it felt artificial and distancing; the prose flattened my impositions. Here's the result.

> Lost/Found | *David Allen Sullivan*
>
> Up late with Yousif al-Timimi—former interpreter now living in Salt Lake City with his family—as the last candles pool I ask: *What's the hardest thing you saw?* He'd been called to Camp Taji's main gate about a suspicious package a woman was carrying. When he arrived she was clutching a crimped-over paper bag to her chest and the men were yelling at her with their AKs. He made them stand down, then approached, asked what she had. She slowly unrolled it. Inside, the head of her son. She was asking the American soldiers to help look for the body so she could bury him properly. Yousif says: *As she talked she continued to stroke her son's hair.*

On the other side, a poem like "Beekeeper, Sulaymaniyah" attempts to counter that harrowing, downward movement of many of these poems with an image of survival and caring. It doesn't turn away from devastation—after all, it begins with a mortar round missing its intended target and decimating a hive, but it recalls a poem from *Every Seed of the Pomegranate*, "The Day the Beekeeper Died, Sulaymaniyah," in which an image of transcendence occurs when bees cover the beekeeper's daughter. In both poems I wanted an image of hope in the midst of destruction.

> Beekeeper, Sulaymaniyah
>
> Across the field the man strides
> with a metal sheet to lay over
> the mortar-round-wrecked hive,
> snuff out oxygen.

Bees rise, thundering
against the thing that would save them.
He hears them pinging on the underside,
suffocating lives to save lives.
Honey
rivers at his feet, the square of metal
turns too hot to hold. Fire made them angry,
smoke makes them lazy.
The militia
can't retract the fire that rained from the sky,
can't tamp down what mortar rounds ignited—
miles off the intended target—and apologies
only attract arrows of blame.
Bees on fire
smoke the air, etching grey lines
like tracer rounds, they reel
near their hive, crawl its blown off
burning lid, probe the sweet reek
of burnt honey.
They spin away and back,
not knowing whom to attack or what
to save. Crisped bodies dot the ground
like burnt popcorn.
He talks down
the frenzied, sees sleepy bees ride
his netted face. There's the queen,
centered on the mesh, her abdomen
throbbing.
They destroyed the hive
but couldn't kill what lived in it.
When he lifts her off she collapses in
his palm.
He's her protector,
cradling her causes the rest to swarm.
Now the bees are buzzing and crawling
all over him.
The bee-draped human form
walks slow towards the downed juglan tree's
cavity. He pours them in, praying
they'll rebuild again.

It is that deep-rooted sense that they will survive and prosper—that there are spiritual lessons coming out of the suffering—that I have encountered in almost all the Iraqis I've corresponded with. The variety of forms is trying to suggest the variety of ways that is expressed.

RW: *"Interrogation," the last poem in* Black Butterflies*, brings together both the documentary and healing tones. The poem ostensibly records the interrogation of a detained artist (inspired by Serwar Baran's paintings, as you write in the epigraph). By using the dialogue form of the interrogation, you record the interlocutor's fascist, bureaucratic brutality while also allowing your artist to have the poem's last word—"kindness"—which startles and calls to mind among other things Naomi Shihab Nye's poem by that name. Can you talk about the origins of "Interrogation," the process of writing it—and in what way the detained artist's voice doubles somehow as your own? Is his courage what you seek? What is your purpose here? And where is Serwar Baran now?*

DAS: "Interrogation" feels like a gift of a poem. I'd been looking at Baran's artwork online, and when I visited Adnan al-Sayegh and his wife in London—where I was served a glorious Iraqi dinner by his wife—I discovered that they were friends, and that Adnan had been gifted one of Baran's pieces when he left Baghdad. I have a photograph of the two of us in front of it. I was moved by Adnan's description of Baran having been a figurative painter, and how he shifted to more abstract images to avoid censorship under Saddam Hussein's government. I thought how interesting that a visual artist could move into other forms of expression, but how much trickier for a writer to escape the censor. In fact, Adnan had left because some of his work, particularly his critical epic poem *Uruk's Anthem*, had got him in trouble.

I dictated "Interrogation" into my cell phone one morning, simply recording the conversation that my dream had conjured. I put this poem last in the book, both so an Iraqi would have the last word, and to have that last word be kindness. I think of the importance of that word to our world right now, and certainly Naomi Shihab Nye's poem was in the back of my head. But I also wanted that harsher voice, the one that thinks it's doing right by supporting those in power and cutting short what they might term "divisive" dissent. I've been thinking a lot about those in power, when they get power, they often do anything to stay in power. It's hard to resist those temptations and to actually serve the ones that elected or chose someone.

I didn't have a specific painting of his in mind, but the horse appeared when the questions and answers began. Baran, who still paints in Baghdad, has returned to figurative art, such as the kneeling, blindfolded prisoners that are reproduced in my book just before the poems begin. Post-invasion,

members of the government and extremist religious leaders have replicated some of the repressive measures that were practiced under Saddam.

Interrogation

—inspired by Serwan Baran's paintings

Why have you hidden the man's face?

The painting's of the horse
not the man.

Why is his cuff frayed?
Does he represent the poor?

He's a farmer.
He is poor.

Why did you paint the horse with nostrils flared?

Horses widen their nostrils
when smelling.

Why are its teeth bared?

It's lipping up the fig
from the man's hand.

Why does the horse's cheek strain?

Its muscles are working, extending
around the brown fist of the fig.

You've shown the ribs of its chest.

Yes, a horse has ribs.

Its eye seems crazed.

Crazed is in the eye of the beholder.

But it looks out of the canvas at us.

While I painted
the horse noticed me.

Then you admit it's about duplicity?

It is about a horse.
A fig.
A man.

You've left out the artist.

I try not to be in my work.

So you admit you're in hiding?

I admit it's a painting.

Do not leave the country in case you're wanted
for further inquiry.

Then do not take the country
from me.

What was that?

Or the horse. Or the man.

Do you want to go hungry?

I want to grow kinder.

RW: *Both* Black Butterflies Over Baghdad *and* Every Seed of the Pomegranate *are at core anti-war books, maybe two parts of a trilogy on that theme. Your as-yet-unpublished long poem* Nightjars *is perhaps the third panel of the trilogy? In that way you've joined with Brian Turner, Carolyn Forché, Bruce Weigl, Sam Hamill, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Bly, Kenneth Rexroth, Yusef Komunyaka, who've not only written about war but also written or edited whole*

anti-war poetry collections. I think of Nâzım Hikmet, Yehuda Amichai, Paul Laurence Dunbar and others who've devoted their craft to peace and human rights. Do you see your work within a tradition of anti-war poetry—and as activism against today's grip of authoritarianism? Because I know you also write about many other things. I guess I'm asking you to locate your politics and activism in relation to your poetry.

DAS: Do I see myself as an anti-war poet? I like to think that's one aspect of my writing, and certainly the third part of this trilogy: *Nightjars*—which retells the Gilgamesh epic in a modern context, where the CIA has conned an ex-soldier to return to Baghdad, and then pairs him up with an Iraqi interpreter, Ink—is part of this process of trying to confront, and more deeply understand what is all too easily reduced to news blips and sound bites. It's long, and I'm not sure who'll publish it, but it felt necessary to deal with the Iraqi interpreters who have been largely abandoned as we left Iraq. I think if any good is to come of our blunders, it'll have to be in greater connection to the people of Iraq, and greater understanding of the deep history of the region. I regularly teach many of the poets you mention, including Carolyn Forché's anthology *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-century Poetry of Witness*, Brian Turner's *Here, Bullet*, Bruce Weigl's *Song of Napalm*, the Vietnamese novel by Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*, and many others.

I think it's crucial to listen to all these voices to register the traumas we're suffering—to feel the traumas our country is enacting on a daily basis. We need to acknowledge that 22 service people commit suicide every day, on average, and do something to change the culture of war around us, the culture in which violence and trauma are accepted as somehow "natural." I didn't set out with the intention of writing these poems, but once they started coming, I felt a duty to find the best poetic expression for them. We need to humanize anyone thought of as Other, and poetry, with its expansive vocabularies, can uniquely do this. I like to think that poetry itself is anti-war, anti-violence, anti-hierarchies, anti-separation. It is radically personal. Poems of kindness and connection are necessary, and counter the way we are all too often encountering others through a scrim of predetermined images and preconceptions.

Distance, all to often, allows us to injure or kill without acknowledgment. A drone, operated by someone in a building in Idaho that kills someone across the world, is just a symptom of that greater disconnect we're experiencing. We have to actively engage with those we don't understand, to meet them face to face if possible, to use the technologies we're given to empathetically connect, to listen, and to learn. The less we see the consequences of our actions, the less we're willing to draw them down. But

that same technology that distances can bring others closer if we're willing to redirect them. In fact, I could not have created this book without all the technologies that have connected me to so many Iraqis.

RW: *The title poem here, the magical realist long poem "Black Butterflies Over Baghdad," is such a unique text with its two voices, one the voice of the repressive fictionalized "inspector general" Awad Qusay, who relays the story of a "miracle" on Tahrir Square, and the other being his replacement when he's "converted" to the protestor's cause. I know this poem was published in collaboration with Ghaib in a limited edition as an art book. Is that book available? Could you talk about the title poem's origin and process, its particular blend of fiction and nonfiction, its source materials? Ghaib also painted the remarkable cover image for "Black Butterflies Over Baghdad," titled* Ascension*.*

DAS: The artist Ghassan Ghaib is an Iraqi immigrant to LA whose artwork is both beautiful and disturbing. He creates found object sculptures, and pushes mediums to their outer edges. For instance, the cover painting of this book is a large butterfly whose body consists of a black map of Baghdad, cratered by holes, and in the center—where the body of the butterfly is a black smear—he's poked two knitting needles through the fabric. They form a yellow cross, and could be either the target for a bomb strike, or an allusion to Christianity and the concepts of suffering and rebirth. Ghassan is attempting to have some gallery showings of his artwork where we'll stage some readings.

Ghassan had created many butterfly-shaped newspaper cut-outs, superimposed with maps on them, crisscrossed by barbed wire, bomb craters, and writing held in the hands of friends, strangers, fellow artists, and poets. My long title poem combines prose and poetry, and was written in response to Ghassan's photographs of his butterfly-shaped pieces. I was moved by the mundane situations in the photographs, and the way the art suggested metaphors of flight and escape, and I wrote a prose and poetry combination in response, which Ghassan had printed as a limited-edition art book with our work on facing pages.

I had been already thinking and writing about the heroic resistance to government corruption in Iraq by the young people, and the way they were trying to include many voices—even having a tent set up In Tahrir Square for women to have privacy and support each other. I was moved by this "lost generation's" faith in the future. They're called that because many missed years of education due to the conflicts. I also wanted an image of hope and change within this book of loss and catastrophe, and I wanted that image to embody how those who actively worked to suppress dissent, or those who challenge authorities, can be converted. Iraqi novels, like Ahmed

Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, and short stories like those in Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition* inspired me to delve into the surreal, and to marry the factual to the fantastical.

RW: *David, would you say a few words about the new co-translated poems we encounter in this issue of* Red Wheelbarrow*? Here you are also translating Uyghur and other Chinese contemporary poets. What are some of the new joys and challenges you are encountering now that you have been in contact with emerging Uyghur, Tibetan, and other young Chinese poets?*

DAS: I worry that I'm doing a disservice to the poems, and imposing my own poetic sensibilities; however, I know that the process has been changing me, and trust those who speak both languages to help guide the process. Working with voices unlike my own I discover images that are new to me, and sensibilities that alter me. The co-translations you've chosen are from a manuscript created during my Fulbright year I spent teaching in Xi'an, China, called *Night is Ink to All Pens*. I can't publish it without removing the work of Uyghur and Tibetan poets, because it might endanger them. Poetry, by humanizing our connection to others, by expressing things in unique voices, by articulating sensibilities, reaches across gaps and closes them. I'm grateful to have a few of them appear here, even though they can't include the poet's name.

Since my partner speaks Chinese, I had an unusual experience of China. We took our two kids there; they were 10 and 12 at the time, and I was invited to many cities to give lectures. The kids picked up Chinese quickly; I did not. But we travelled in Tibet, and twice I was able to go to Xinjiang, the Uyghur region in the north west of China, and each time I was assigned a graduate student guide, and they often had access to VPNs and knew much about the outside world. When I was asked to teach a graduate seminar I asked the eight students and my professor friend who teaches translation, Wang Manliang, to gather as many young, diverse poets from across China as possible. I emphasized that they should look for ethnic minorities, women poets, and rural writers. Unfortunately, it's too dangerous to list the names of the Uyghur poets for fear of reprisal. They appear here uncredited, to avoid retaliation, while still having these voices heard in the US. The denial of human rights was devastating to witness while I was there, and has only gotten worse. In fact, I can't have contact with my Tibetan and Uyghur poet friends because of the draconian tactics of the government. I'm grateful you've also included a few by Meng Hui, an older Chinese poet, who's willing to attack authoritarian tendencies in oblique, surreal poems, which wield images with scalpel-like dexterity as he deconstructs systems of thought and self-censorship.

RW: *Thank you for this new book and thank you for all your culture work and leadership in poetry, David. And speaking of leadership, you are the current Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County. Could you fill us in on your laureate project coming to fruition this coming year? Thank you so much for spending time with us today, David. We will always look forward to your next project.*

DAS: My poet laureate community project is still ongoing. *Agents of Change: A Collaborative Art & Poetry Project* is being created with local artists and poets. The idea is to post on our website art that is submitted, and then have local poets write ekphrastic poems in response to them. It will be part of the movement out of our shut-down crisis feeling, and a chance to awaken a sense of connection. It'll culminate in a gallery show with poets reading beside the selected work. Art is due by January 1st, 2022, and poems by April 1st, 2022.

Thanks for your thoughtful questions, and for creating a forum where poetry speaks up for those who can't, and gives voice to those too often Othered.

ARTIST STATEMENT: ELIZABETH JIMÉNEZ MONTELONGO

In the series *The Euphoric Dance of the Unconquered Mind*, textured oil paintings of Mexika (Aztec) dancers exude energy and power to celebrate the continued tradition of Indigenous dance ceremony. This work is based on Mexika dancers from the San Francisco Bay Area who preserve and practice Indigenous Mexican dance in the 21st century, across social and political borders. To create the work, I crop and combine my photographs of dancers in movement and apply paint with a palette knife to create heavy impasto. These paintings honor our Indigenous ancestors and local culture keepers and celebrate liberation of the mind.

Her Name Is Freedom

Freedom is a little girl

She dreams up the impossible
Just to make it possible
She invents a rule
Just so she can break it

When they tell her she can't
She does it three times
And three times as fast
And three times as well

She doesn't want to be controlled
I want to do what I want to do
She makes what she's missing
She finds another way
She stands by her opinion
Until perhaps, convinced otherwise

No shame: she is who she is
No regrets: she did what she did
Yet sometimes, she is sorry
And she's not afraid to change

She laughs after hours
Her outside voice
Is her only voice
And must be heard

She has ideas
And she gives them life
She has dreams
And she makes them reality

And I am here
Holding her hand
Telling her que sí se puede
Even though she already knows

She is an artist
She is a storyteller
She is a creator
As fierce as she is sweet

Freedom is a little girl

ELIZABETH JIMÉNEZ MONTELONGO: Mujeres Danzando oil on canvas, 36" x 24"

ELIZABETH JIMÉNEZ MONTELONGO: Celestial oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

ELIZABETH JIMÉNEZ MONTELONGO: Merge oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

ELIZABETH JIMÉNEZ MONTELONGO: Feathers and Incense oil on canvas, 48" x 36"

ARTIST STATEMENT:
SCOTT MILLER

I make paintings that are interesting to look at, and that give the viewer's mind a new experience. Whenever my mind experiences something new and interesting, especially in a painting, in music, or in a story, my mind expands a little and and I can understand the world better. These are illustrations from a book currently in progress, to be finished around 2023. The working title is *The Planet that Was Off By One.*
http://www.waxmoth.com

SCOTT MILLER: Artifical Stars Complete watercolor, 11" x 16", 2021

SCOTT MILLER: Volcanoes and Family Tree watercolor, 11" x 16", 2021

SCOTT MILLER: We Like to Play in the Water watercolor, 11" x 16", 2021

SCOTT MILLER: Early Humans watercolor, 11" x 16", 2021

The Walking Dead | *Merail Larth*

We were born in the middle, yet they claimed we were last
We were born in the middle, and so we were seen as third-rate class
We were born in the middle, but we were walking a war-filled path
We were born in the middle, for this, no one gave us a chance

They would act as though they sympathize with us, but we knew of their games behind our backs
For while we starved, they dined over meat and goats on platters made of gold
For while we bathed in the tears of our kids, they bathed in the joy of their sins
For while we bowed our heads to the Gods above, they were selling their souls to the one in hell

We kicked and screamed, screamed and kicked, yet the only ones who bled were those of our kin
They called us the walking dead, for our pockets were as empty as their chests
But for us, one loaf of bread was more than enough to fill empty stomachs already filled with love
One childish child's smile was all it would take to remind us of the dreams we used to stick on passing stars
Yes, we were born in the middle, but
given the chance, we could turn it into heaven.

Editor's Note: In this issue, we are publishing many poems of exile and resistance from around the world (Lebanon, Myanmar, Iraq, Uyghur areas in China, Salinas Valley State Prison). Quite a few are written under pen names in order to protect the writers from harassment, imprisonment, or death. In Myanmar this year, four well-known poets were murdered since the coup. The poet Merail Larth (not her real name), who wrote the poem published here, is a teacher in Beirut, Lebanon. David Leonhardt and Sanam Yar of the *New York Times* reported on October 15 of this year that in Lebanon now "weekly grocery bills can equal months of a typical family's income. Banks are refusing to let people withdraw money. Basic medicines are often unavailable, and gas station lines can last hours. Every day, many homes lack electricity." We are honored to publish Merail's poem here about life in Beirut and many other brave poems of truth and resistance from across the globe.

POEMS AND JOURNAL ENTRIES FROM MYANMAR COUP, WINTER 2021

We Fight | *Nga Pi Kyaw*

For our martyrs and lionhearts, whose blood and bravery paved the way for us;
For democracy and a better future for our sons and daughters;
And for Amay Su who goes through immeasurable sacrifices for us, only to smile afterwards and say it was her "choice" to do so
We fight.

Our chants and our pain stricken hearts
Echo the beating of our pots and pans
Against the filthy evil they summon
With their guns, gases and canons
And yet, with every breath and ounce of strength in our bare hands
We fight.

Until our children no longer have to face the same battles
Until our land is restored in all her beauty, pagodas and temples
Until justice that is long overdue, is served
And our people, although scarred and battered, emerge victorious and more united than ever
Until they realise that they have indeed messed with the wrong generation
We fight.

Three Journal Entries | *Nga Pi Kyaw*

26 Feb 2021
I can feel my heart swell and fill up with so much love and respect for my people, for their selflessness, their generosity, their power to show courage, love and compassion even in the face of terror. It inspires me how willing they are to give away a piece of their own, from their own hard-earned money that they've worked day and night for even if it isn't much.

At the same time, my heart grows heavy. So heavy because I know my people do not deserve this. My people should not have to

lie awake at night in fear of the police barging into our own houses. My people should not have to worry about losing their sons/daughters/families to the brutality of psychopathic and power-hungry men with guns. My people should not have to die fighting for our rights in our own country.

We deserve freedom. We deserve justice. We deserve a future. And we will not concede until we get them. I believe in each and every one of us. The revolution must succeed.

2.28.2021
Milk Tea Alliance Day
I always say that my dream is to be a part of the cast of *Les Miserables*. But today I got to live that dream. And it was horrifying. The military has intensified its crackdown on the protestors all over the nation. The streets that I used to take to go to school have now become a battlefield filled with tear gas, stun grenades and live rounds. There are students my age on the streets risking their lives to fight for their freedom. My city Yangon, which used to be buzzing with street hawkers, traffic and shopping malls, is now erupting with the chants and screams of protestors behind barricades facing off the blazing guns of the military, who derive pleasure from killing the civilians. We lost 26 lives today. More than 1000 are injured. Over 200 are kidnapped. These lives are not merely just statistics. These lives meant the world to their families. They were someone's son, someone's sister, someone's father, someone's mother, someone's teacher. While most of us can return home at the end of the day to have dinner with our families, their families will have empty chairs at their tables that will never be full again. It's just too painful to bear. My heart breaks into a million pieces for my people.

3.3.2021
Today has been another 'bloodiest day' in Myanmar since the coup. 52 people in my country have been killed in one day. I worry that one day those deaths will be so normalised and become merely stats. THESE AREN'T JUST STATS! They ended the lives of 52 people. They destroyed 52 families. Those 52 people had dreams. They had plans for their futures. And now they are never coming back to life. They

are never going to see their friends and families again. My phone is constantly buzzing with the news of death, death and another death. While I have somehow become numb and indifferent to the pictures of blood, gore and dead bodies, one of those pictures stood out to me. Her name was Kyal Sin. She was shot in the head with a bullet while protesting. Maybe because we were the same age, maybe because we both were girls, maybe because we both shared the same love for our families, her death felt the most real to me. Her death makes me feel guilty for being safe in my own house right now. Her death woke me up from my numbness and made me realize how wrong and vile the world is right now.

I never got to know her in real life, but I'll always wish I did.

Poem for a Nineteen-Year-Old Martyr | *Nga Pi Kyaw*

Myanmar, 2021

Dear Kyal Sin,

As soon as I heard about you I looked through your profile.

You were beautiful. You liked to dance. You were only 19, bursting with so much potential and…Life.

The relationship you had with your father was rare and beautiful; you were his love, his pride, his world —just as he was yours.

I cannot fathom the immense pain and loss he must be feeling right now. But I know this.

You were the best of us.

You did not deserve to have fallen at the hands of heartless scums like them. They had guns but you had faith. A strong, resolute and unshakable faith that can never be killed.

Thank you for fighting for us and for setting a shining example of bravery. The impact of how you fought will be felt for generations.

Your father is so proud of you. We are all so proud of you.

Rest in power, Angel.

ANONYMOUS UYGHUR POETRY

The following four poems are from Uyghur poets from the Xinjiang region of China, where they are experiencing cultural genocide perpetrated by the Chinese government. I thank them for entrusting me with their poems, which we worked on together. I can no longer have contact with them for fear of reprisal, so these poems are being published without the poet's name attached. *—David Allen Sullivan*

Master of the Star | *Anonymous Uyghur Poet*

The birdcage
is suffused with the death
of the partridge.
When the family comes home
after searching and not finding
they return to find emptiness.

These days
the scent of spring
infuses the air,
and by the cage
four kids with eagle-sharp noses
shove summer's head inside,
then hold it firmly closed.

Outside it's verdant.
Outside, a pair of parrots
pick at the stars
with blunt beaks.

Then the Lord of the stars,
gently, painlessly
pecks apart the parrots.

Co-translated by the author and David Allen Sullivan

ساڭا قونۇپ ئۆتكەن
سانسىز قۇشلارنىڭ بىرىمەن
سېنى سۆيۈپ ئۆتكەن
شاخلىرىڭنى تارىغان
يوپۇرماقلىرىڭ بىلەن سىرداشقان
شامالنىڭ بىر پارچىسى مەن

چۈمىلىلەر خىياللىرىمدۇر
سەيلە قىلىۋاتقان ۋاقتىنىڭ سامان يولىنى

سايەڭ
قۇياش بىلەن قىلغان دىيالوگۇمدىن ھاسىل
بولغان
مۇساپىرلار لاگىرىدۇر
ئەي دەرەخ

مەن سېنىڭ ئىجارە تەلەپ قىلمايدىغان
بەدەل تەلەپ قىلمايدىغان
مىننەت قىلمايدىغان ئۆيۈڭدە
توپىدىن ياسالغان تەختتە
ئولتۇرىۋاتقان
مۇساپىر بىر خىيال
ئەي دەرەخ

I am one of those countless birds
that once feathered your branches
I am a little breath of the wind
which used to kiss you
comb your twigs
and speak intimately with your leaves

Lines of ants are my thoughts
traveling the Milky Way of time

Your shadows
are a refugee camp
invented by
the talk that threads
together sun and me—
O, my dear tree!

I am an exile,
an illusion
that sits on the soil throne
at the foot of your house
where no rent's demanded
and no coins are exchanged—
dear, dear tree!

Co-translated by the author and David Allen Sullivan

My Father's Poems | *Anonymous Uyghur Poet*

I am one
of his poems:
brown, rhymed, and long as life.

He's someone
with a beard
who lives inside the Uyghur language,
peeps into the empty crevices
of poems, and grins, speechless.

He's a spider
who builds an imaginary web
woven with words.
Ignorance is a form of understanding.
If you read informed by it
everything begins again.

The sun dangles high
like a fresh apple,
and its fragrance suffuses the sky.
When the horizon glows red
the thief tries to pick it and eat.

On a cloudy day,
some bizarre words
show a beard to a face.
I hear someone say:
"Here's your father!"
The man they've named
points a finger at the sky,
asks: *Who illuminates the sun?*

Co-translated by the author and David Allen Sullivan

The Secret | *Anonymous Uyghur Poet*

The wind reads my secret
but won't whisper it
to anyone just yet.

If you try to know
my secret too eagerly
you'll miss out on helping
puff up the dandelions with me.

Can you smell it drift from a wild flower?
Though you may ask for it over and over,
you won't get near it without a drop of water
from summer.

Co-translated by the author and David Allen Sullivan

为了吃掉这颗桔子
我首先要
虚构桔皮
为了剥掉桔皮
我先要
虚构一棵桔树
爬上桔树前
我必须虚构这世界确实
存在果实
以及果实这种说法
现在，我开始虚构秋天
虚构一年的劳作
我开始认为
汗水，曾是太阳流出的热油
我忍受太阳时
还要忍受风和季候
而这已足够久
最后，还有想象
还有文明的说辞
或借口
现在我要大口吃下
咀嚼起来
叫桔汁四溢
然后我就吐出
过冬的桔籽
虚构春天

In order to eat this orange
I need to first
invent the orange peel.
In order to peel the orange
I need to first
invent the orange tree.
Before I climb the orange tree
I need to invent words,
the existence of fruit

and statements
about fruit.
Now, I begin to invent Autumn
and a year's hard work.
I start to believe
sweat is the hot oil outflow of the sun,
and when I endure it
I must also stand inside winds and seasons.
And when it has been long enough
imagination arrives—
as a civil pretext?
an excuse?
I eat the orange, let it fill my mouth.
I chew
and let orange juice overflow.
I spit
the seed of Winter's suffering
and it burrows in,
begins to invent Spring.

Co-translated by Duan Nan and David Allen Sullivan

我们是橡皮，擦去自身
是一些可供宽恕的错误
证实了我们的存在
而我们祈求（我们继续祈求）
关于世界的谬误
不断发生，不断有机会消磨
我们的肉，橡胶味就总是
占据全新的伤口——
一个可供宽恕的人生？

我们不知从何而来
归宿却早已注定，我们无法
伸出一只具体的手
去描绘黎明，我们出场
观众却开始退席
花园终究不为我们建造
一只出错的小手却终究要挨打
孩子们交出一张
足够丑陋的画——铅笔
就突然用折断的声音质问：谁
教你这样认识世界？

是在这样羞赧的时刻
旧橡皮扔进不被原谅的时间
我们，已是该死的虫子
四散在空无的桌面
我们是死亡的哑巴，无从辩驳

We are erasers, we wipe ourselves out.
Our forgivable mistakes
confirm our existence.
While we pray (we continuously pray),
this world's blunders
keep happening, unceasingly, and unceasingly
they wear down our flesh so a rubbery smell
infects each new wound—
do we lead only one forgivable life?

We don't know where we're from
but our destination's doomed. We can't
stretch out a hand of flesh
to describe the dawn. We come onstage
but the audience is already leaving—
after all, the gardens aren't built for us.
One small hand can make mistakes
that will eventually beat us down.
Children hand out little
ugly paintings—as if a pencil
suddenly used a broken voice to frame a question:
Who taught you to know the world like this?

It is an embarrassing moment
when an old eraser's thrown
into the unforgiven time.
We ought to be dead worms by now,
scattered on an empty desk—
unmoving, mute, incapable of dispute.

Co-translated by Duan Nan and David Allen Sullivan

Fabricated Drawings | *Meng Hui*

树木被切成纸张，你在纸上画树
而树不生长，你画窗子而不打开
你画车轮代替年轮
而不转动——
你画虫子
画你的厌恶，你画丑陋的事物
远离你的技艺——趋近杂乱的现实
烦躁，充满你的笔
你撕碎纸张，而没有血从纸篓渗出
用十年，你画虚构的人生
画你没有丢弃的虫子——活过来
吃你的桌子
十枚指甲噢十只白蚁，画你的灰烬

Trees are cut down for paper.
You draw trees onto paper
but they don't grow. You draw a window
but you can't open it. You draw wheels
to replace annual growth rings
but they won't move.

You draw a worm,
draw your hatred, draw ugly things.
They distract you from your artistry—
press too close to chaotic reality.
Your pen's filled with agitation,
You tear up the paper, and throw it away,
but no blood oozes from the wastebasket.

For ten years you draw your life as a fable,
you draw undiscarded worms—rebirth occurs
when you eat your desk.
Ten fingernails are ten termites.

Draw your ashes.

Co-translated by Duan Nan and David Allen Sullivan

On the Subway | *Xiangying*

几乎所有人
都盯着手机
严肃 认真
屏幕点燃了
他们的脸庞
照亮了
整个车厢
忘带手机的我
煎受着炙烤
慌乱中
我把右手插进口袋
再掏出来
仔细地阅读着自己
掌纹的形状

Almost all the passengers
stare at their cellphones,
solemnly attentive
to kindling screens
as to a fire that lights
their faces up and down
the whole swaying car.

But I forgot my phone
so must endure the burning
in a mass panic.
I put my right hand
in my pocket, pull it out
and carefully read
my palm.

Co-translated by Mike Zhou and David Allen Sullivan

我把锅盖里外刷了2遍
锅反复刷了2遍
炉子上下擦了2遍
抹布投了无数遍
洗好樱桃。端给
脚搭茶几身陷沙发看电视的他。

I scrubbed the pot lid twice, inside, outside,
scoured the pot twice,
wiped down the stove twice, top-bottom, bottom-top,
rinsed the rag over and over,
then washed the cherries and brought them to
the one sunk into the sofa with his feet on the tea table.

Co-translated by Wang Manliang and David Allen Sullivan

Whispers | *Almenaa Ali*

همس هنا عند نحري
هنا خلف أُذْني
هنا بينَ نهدي
أُحبّكِ
لماذا كذبتَ عليَّ
وقلت أُحّبكِ أكثرُ مني
فرطتُ مِنْ البكاء اغرقتُ
وجهي بالمطر الأسود
ألوفَ السماء بنظري
وأعد النجوم
لم يكفِ عدد النجوم
جراحكَ لي

Whisper here, into my neck,
and here, behind my right ear,
now here, between my breasts.
Say: *I love you.*
Wait, why'd you lie to me?
Why'd you say you love me more
than yourself?
I fall into crying and sink,
face blackened with rain.
I look up at the sky
and count the spread of stars.
Your wounds in me
exceed the uncounted stars.

Co-translated by the author and David Allen Sullivan

NEW POEMS FROM SALINAS VALLEY STATE PRISON

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FEATURE:
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Salinas Valley State Prison is five miles north of the city of Soledad, in Monterey County, California. It houses close to 3,700 men. The D-Yard writing workshop was started in 2012 by prison psychologist Dr. Benjamin Bloch and the poet Ellen Bass. The poetry program has switched this past year to A-Yard where there is more inmate and staff leadership. Since instructors are not yet teaching again in person, they currently supply workshop prompts to a recreational therapist and inmate facilitators.

As Dr. Bloch wrote in 2015: "In a world where volition is systematically crushed—and not only by the people in uniform—the workshop's purpose is to offer participants the opportunity to embrace creativity as a way to actively transform their experience, to become makers and creators." *Red Wheelbarrow* is committed to publishing the voices of California prison inmates alongside the work of "free" men and women, both students and professionals. This year we are privileged to publish the work of four inmates, including a special feature on the unique art, poetry, and journaling of inmate Jessica Diana Garza, as curated by Rose Black.

Current workshop instructors Rose Black, Lisa Charnock, Julie Murphy, and Ken Weisner helped initiate Right to Write Press (https://righttowritepress.org), a Northern California nonprofit that promotes the growth of emerging writers incarcerated in California state prisons.

Central American Dream | *Ubaldo Teque, Jr.*

I reach the yard's fountain, as my brothers and sisters
reach the border.

A dream served cold, stumbling into a nightmare.

The cornfields are dry, like my dark, salty skin.
The forests invaded by drought, the clouds are empty.
Mother earth is having a miscarriage,
she's spinning wobbly.

My step is fragile and slow,
With nowhere to go.

The smell of order—
Metal and concrete soldered together,
Promise to hold me for the rest of my life.

Writing my fury and sorrow,
I remind everyone that I'm alive.

Startled by the prison's alarm, I sit up.
When a fog of pepper-spray creeps towards me,
I pull my t-shirt over my face mask
and shut my eyes tight.

Another disagreement, another fight.
An icy fire burns my skin, a mean cough moves my neck.

The virus—
Which one, hate or Covid?

Inside of Sleep | *Ubaldo Teque, Jr.*

Poverty makes time move dreadfully slow.
Homemade tortillas, black coffee, blessedness.

Guatemala wounded, its people staggering.
The outside prison sunny, the inside thriving on drugs.

I was walking down the corridor when I passed
a female guard, curvy, covered in lush green.

What time is it? she asked. I, wrapped in sky, noticed then
that my watch had died, but the world continued to spin.

Deep in the forest, camouflaged by branches,
Quetzal contemplates invading leafless trees.

Kukulkan guides, protects me, the rock that speaks,
Blesses the lonesome, sick, and poor.

Inside of sleep I'm a barefoot warrior,
Thick poetry books my shield.

With a number two pencil I search for my mother earth's
Core, where everything comes together,

Inside of sleep, of time.

The Blue Ubaldo | *Ubaldo Teque, Jr.*

after Terrance Hayes

I'll never see the parole board
LWOPs never do: doesn't matter
Innocence exonerates.

Yard time—two empty eight-ounce
Folgers jars, one on each hand
One for the air, one for the sun.

Nighttime brings weed smoke
Forenoon brings a blue cloudless
Sky, today I hope not to die.

Romance a red rose,
She'll never backstab or leave,
Neither will poetry.

Blue are my pants, shirt and pen,
My wound is bright red and deep;
Writing, art, have immortalized me.

Cynthia reads my poems at the
Coffee shop, her dimples dance
As she stirs her mocha.

Respirando | *Ubaldo Teque, Jr.*

En marcha pa'delante—no al alcohol,
drogas, no a la casaca.

Pluma, lápiz, tamborinado composiciones
historias cortas, y poemas.

Abono y tierra = un nuevo principio

Excéntrico porque platico con las flores
y plantas.

Somatando, aventando, sonrisa enojada,
comunicación sin hablar.

Conexión a los espíritus: los cuervos avisan
El Kukul guia, y el achiote cura.

Madrina de los comales, por favor!
no me olvides en la oscuridad.

Para mamita y papito

Breathing | *Ubaldo Teque, Jr.*

Marching forward—no alcohol,
drugs, no bullshit.

Pencil, pen, drumming essays,
short stories, & poems.

Compost & soil = new start.

Eccentric. I speak to flowers
& plants.

Slamming, throwing, angry smile,
non-verbal communication.

Connection to the spirits: crows warn,
Kukul guides, & achiote cures.

Godmother of comales, please!
don't forget me in the blackness.

Para mamita y papito

Eye of the Tiger | *David Massette*

So beautiful, like polished glass,
translucent, glimmering, bottle rocks.
Geology rocks!
Metamorphic, sedimentary, and igneous,
billions of years old.

Each rock has a story, a history,
a forensic past to be unlocked.
The stone age never ends for a rock.

Erosion, cementation, folds, and uplift.
Igneous pushes up and rebuilds.
Aqueous tears down and levels.
Strata, striations, gravel, pebbles, boulders.

Rocks talk. Dust, sand.
Sometimes they shout, sometimes they whisper,
sometimes they support, sometimes they shine.

not be an unsung hero. If you don't catch
it, you'll lose it.

Hope is...
and should be an unspoken word. That breathes
the glory of another day.

Sorrow is...
not being able to see, my mother
put to rest.

I am a...
moving sunbeam, that's learnt to take its
time. I'm still riding.

My journey is...
to understand, the understanding
of my life.

In a dark time...
of my life, is where I learnt.
How to live in light.
The dark, could never, hold my light.

FEATURE | TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ART: MS. JESSICA DIANA GARZA

What Did Their Eyes See?

Her own passionate self unfolding, springing forth from a wasteland of pleadings.

The bindings the metamorphosed body longs to escape, abandoned into institutionalized gender.

Ready to know this woman, the goddess Diana kissing my contours and making me whole.

I am a transgender woman named

Jessica Diana Garza

During Ms. Garza's imprisonment, she has been committed to creating original prison art. Although she was pressured to spend her time drawing hearts, flowers, and other objects suitable for tattoos, she was determined to depict prisons, prison life, and her own prison experience. This included recent self-portraits, images of her before-prison life, sketches of the many animals who eased her loneliness, and memories of the food and drink that gave her comfort.

Ms. Garza never compromised when it came to her art: "Good artwork seeks a place of honor that breathes life into the soul of the artist that created it.

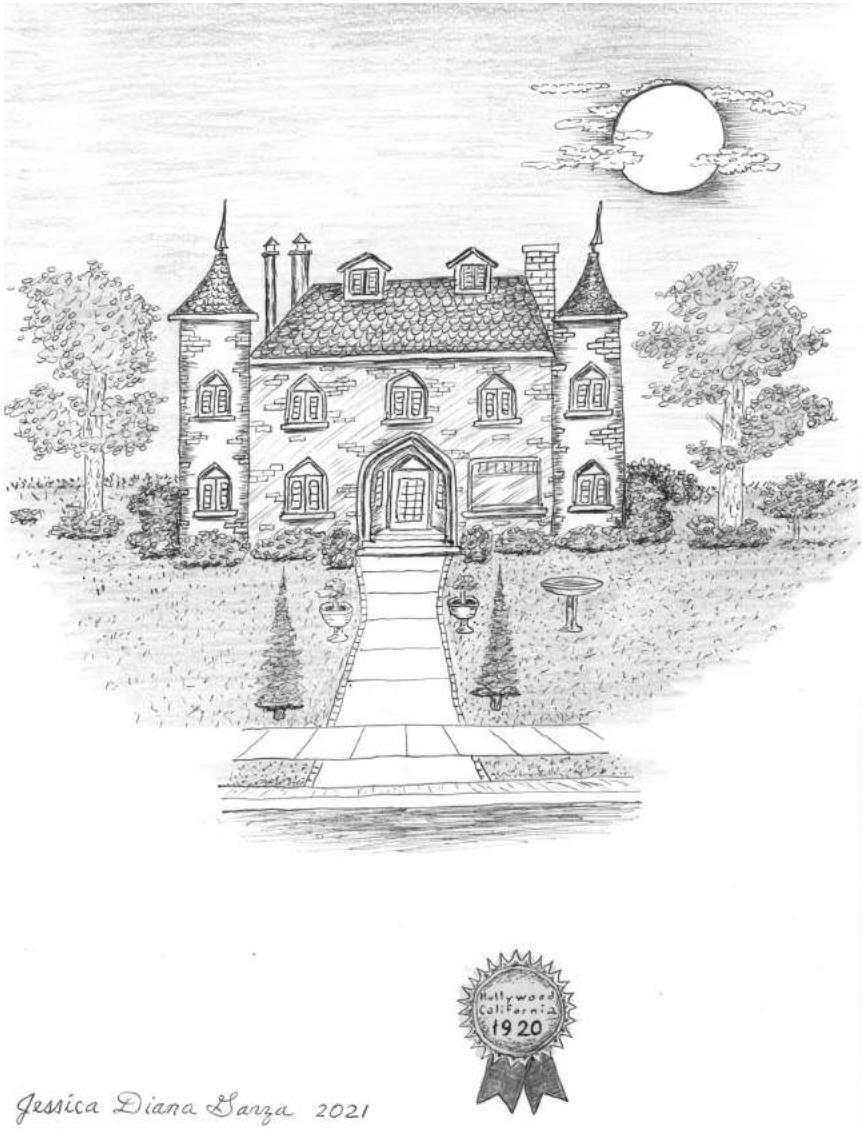
"I've managed to dedicate myself to my artistic creations, as you can see, by all the intricate detailed pen and ink I'm carving into these blank white papers. I spend hour upon hour on line work, composition, and perspective.

"I'm just glad to be able to share my artwork and writing with anyone who has the opportunity to see it. That really pleases me, because I'm expressing what's inside."

Ms. Jessica Diana Garza is awaiting approved transfer to a women's prison.

—Rose Black, prison writing workshop leader, Salinas Valley State Prison

JESSICA DIANA GARZA: What Did Their Eyes See? pen and ink on paper
The view from this ink work is from Kern Valley State Prison, facility C, building 8, cell 102.



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Secrets pen and ink on paper

Pre-Prison Memoir

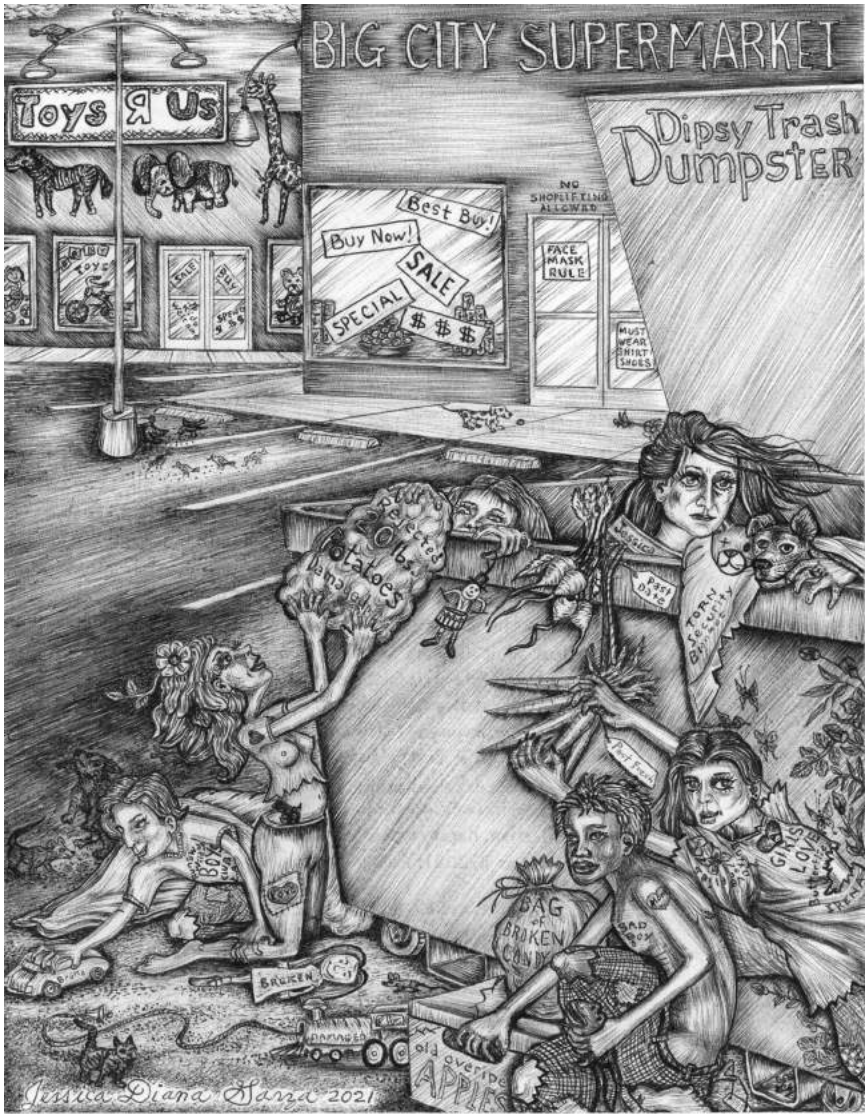
On the day I moved into my aunt's house, she put her finger to her sealed lips and whispered to me, "secret." She led me by the hand and showed me the bathroom's secret labyrinth entrance. She told me that if ever a burglar or intruder entered the house I was to run into the bathroom, crawl into the secret spaces of the wall and hide.

As a child I could easily crawl the labyrinth of hidden cubbyholes and crawl spaces that began at the first floor. Doors of the entranceways were disguised as part of the walls. The hidden crawl-ways transversed the inside of the thick back walls of most of the rooms.

One of the crawl spaces led to a narrow hidden stairway. It climbed up and ended at a door that opened into a completely hidden-in-secret upstairs room. The room was large enough to hide a whole family.

But that wasn't all: attached to the back wall there was a ladder that led up to a trap door. The trap door opened into the large and extensive standing spaces of the attic.

Sometimes I would crawl inside the walls and practice my silent stealth by listening through the walls to people's private conversations. I'd stand on my tippy-toes and peek through the hidden peep-holes. In this way I learned that a lot of people held secrets. The old house held many secrets, and was haunted by the ghosts of its past, and by the owners who had died there.



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Dumpster Diving pen and ink on paper

Dumpster Diving

A world inside a big, steel box.

There's a lot of happiness in dumpster diving. It's a very cheerful time.

Keeping to the past midnight hours of stray dogs and vampires, we'd set out on our dumpster hunts at night, under the cover of darkness. Once having found a good prospective dumpster to dive into, we'd just leap up, totter on the edge, then dive in.

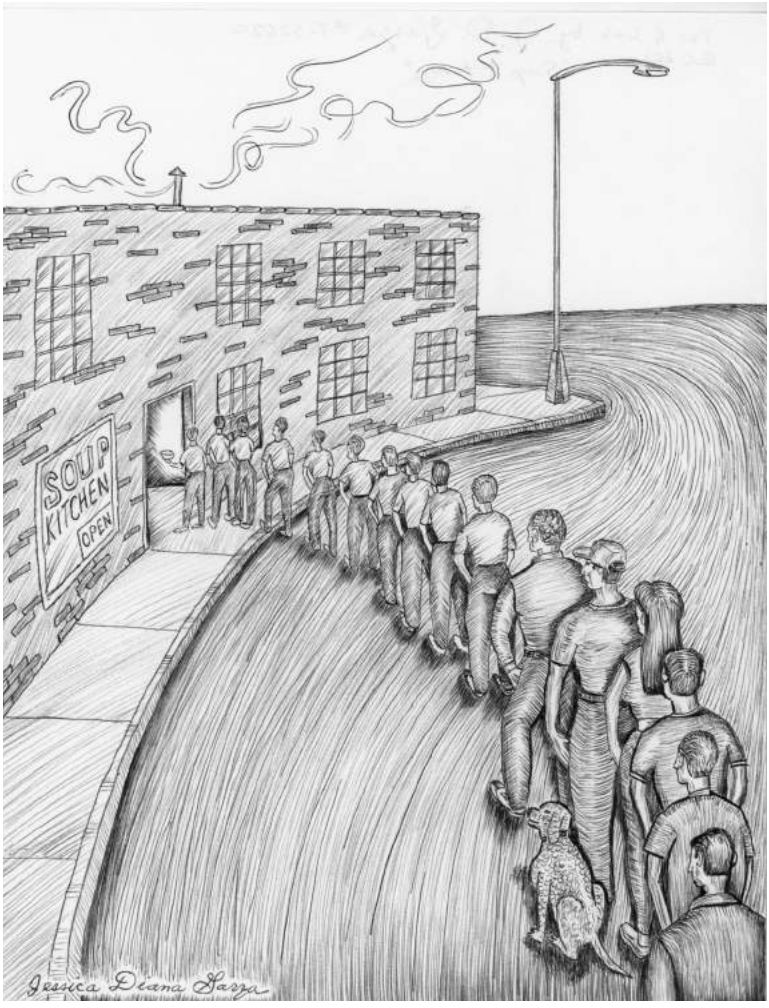
City dumpsters were the best. Those around stores and factories can hide a treasure trove of offerings, just waiting to be picked through and taken home. Produce dumpsters at the back of grocery stores have tons of food that's still good enough to eat. A good hobo stew requires that you first go diving into such smelly places. Be ready for a lot of dirt, muck, and mire, which a good washing can get rid of. Be sure to give the produce a good washing, too.

At the toy-store dumpster at the back of Toys-R-Us we've found brand-new toys, still in the box, just a little broken or perhaps with the corner of the box a little crushed. We've pulled up prize after prize of shiny valuables there, ours for the keeping.

We'd dig inside the dumpsters along the narrow alleys behind the clothing sweat shops in the clothing district and pull up new designer clothes that failed to pass inspection.

One night I found a barely alive little puppy, shaking and cowering in the corner of a dumpster filled with trash, clinging to a worn and ragged teddy bear. I took her home, and she eventually became a loving companion; together we became a dumpster-diving team. She was a natural at sniffing out the very best finds and could often lead me to a dumpster filled with cheeseburgers and fries.

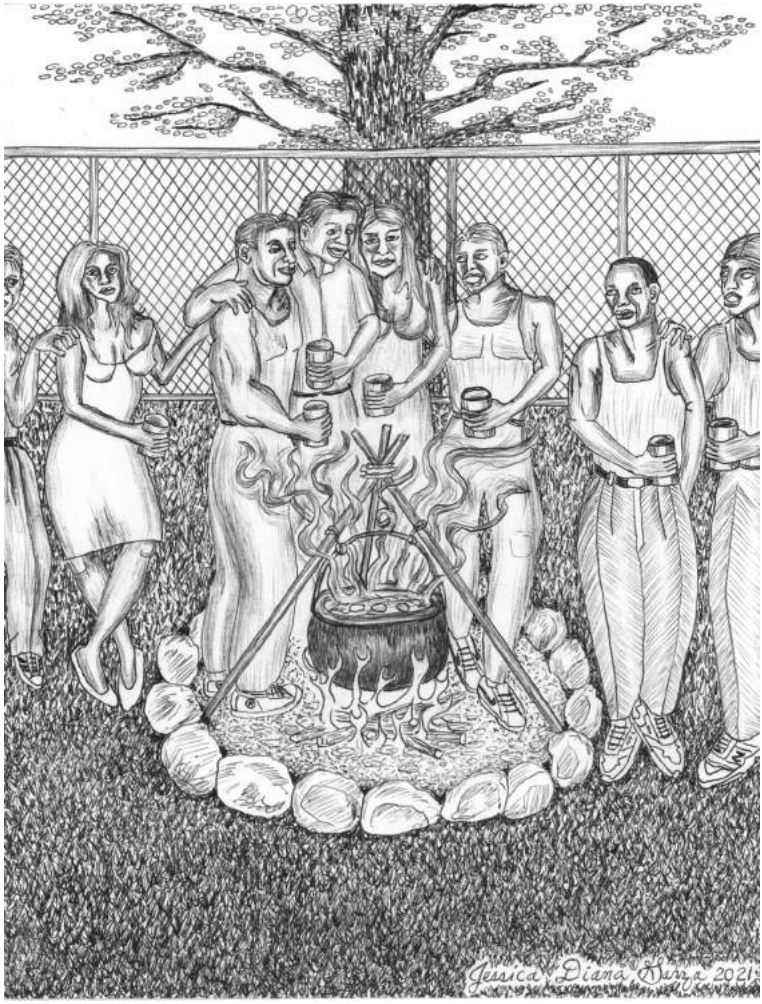
There was a lot of anxiety and anticipation before our late night dumpster-diving excursions; everyone was all worked up. But our exploits were sensational and legendary. It was like being a child again and playing in the mud.



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Soup Kitchen pen and ink on paper

Soup Kitchen

We had to walk over the railroad tracks to get to the Soup Kitchen, our road a crooked snake of tar-covered black top. We could smell the old woman's vegetable soup du jour when we were a block away, causing us to quicken our pace. By the time we reached the long line of hobos, bums, and poor folks, streaked in street grime, our stomachs were growling and grumbling. It was in a dilapidated factory, and people would walk for miles to reach it. If you're ever hungry, you won't regret it. It's free, no charge, to any and all who come to the Soup Kitchen.



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Hobo Stew pen and ink on paper

Hobo Stew

The stew boils in a huge black caldron, over an open flame. Those anxious to fill their repurposed bean cans climb right into the pit! The stew's aroma wafts through the air in curlicues—from celery, carrots, onions, and other ingredients from the hobo chef's own secret recipe. And you wonder at its humble beginnings, made from old, gathered, wilted vegetables and scraps of meat. The line that leads to the Hobo Camp winds all the way around the block. Rich people, poor people, hobos and bums alike, all wait patiently to receive the free, life-giving stew. They shuffle from foot to foot, to stay warm.

Carnival of the Animals

For the lonely prisoner, animals of any kind can give distraction and comfort. Ms. Garza welcomed crickets, spiders, mice, birds, dogs, and an imaginary cat, in her cell and or from her cell window. "I'm just thankful for a little company once in awhile. I never keep my pets locked up. They may leave whenever they like." The following are a couple of excerpts from her writings about her animals and what she and they share. *—RB*

JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Prison Cat pen and ink on paper

Prison Cat

Root-beer brown hard-candy eyes.
A shot glass of bourbon eyes, a glow of golden tea in the night.
Lion-King eyes that sparkle with a knowing gaze.
She stretches her back in ecstasy, extending her claws, digging in.
A well-tuned sports-car engine, purrrring in perfect rhythm.
In the cat's opinion, all prison inmates should be allowed to own a pet cat.
This is an animal proponent's modest proposal.

Jailbird

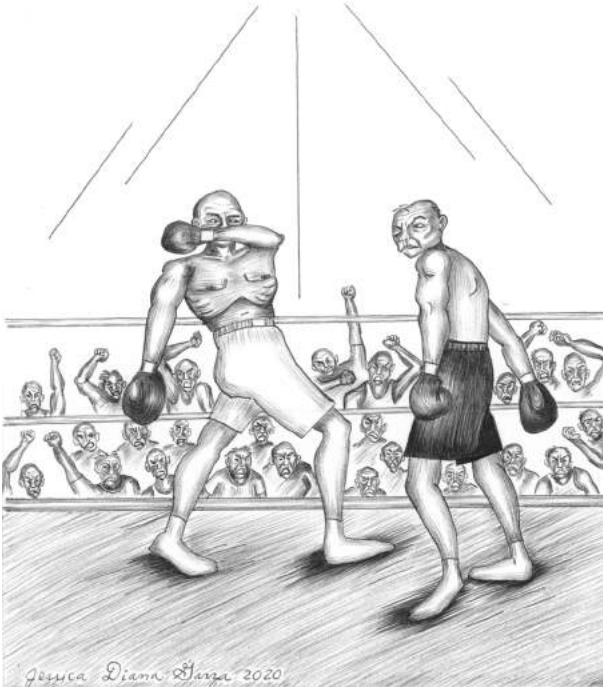
My days ghost by in hushed tones; my bed lies free for prison ghost's embrace. I sit by my prison window. Through prison bars, my wary eyes savor this taste of freedom, my sentence meant to outlive me.

In the distance, I see prison gun towers, perfectly lined up, spaced far apart. Boundaries marked by interspersed signs: Warning—electric fences will kill you. Dried up carcasses of animals entangled in endless fences. My stare pierces the distance. Jailbird in a cage.

Where is freedom for a jailbird? TV commercials of pizza I'm deprived of tasting. I can't see past the concrete that surrounds my cage. I can't see past the long coiling tangles of barbed razor wire atop the walls. The wire reflects the desert sun, it blinds the eyes. Prison guards handcuff my wrists to waist-chains to escort me. My ankles shackled, too, I scoot-walk inch by inch to keep the leg irons from biting, to keep from tripping over the chains.

But now I'm sprouting watery wings! The wings I've prayed for! And with my wings I'll fly way up, up to the top of the highest mountain, where this jailbird will be safe, and free.

JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Jailbird pen and ink on paper
While awaiting transfer to CCWF (Central California Women's Facility)



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: The Boxing Match pen and ink on paper

Boxing

The reason I ruined both my shoulders is because when I was young I was a professional boxer. As a professional boxer I fought for sport, fighting an invisible foe, shadow boxing in my spare time, always ready. Practicing the one two punch, the upper cut, and the kidney shot, dodging left and right, feet shuffling to a silent song.

Here my big, red Everlast Gloves have been fitted on and the strings tightened. All the lights are on and the fans are cheering wildly. Destroying the dark villains, the boxer is the hero. Wound up like a clock, he is ready to release his pent-up fury.

Boxing is an adrenaline-packed sport. The excitement for me was addictive, reminiscent of the Roman Colosseum with gladiators fighting to the death.

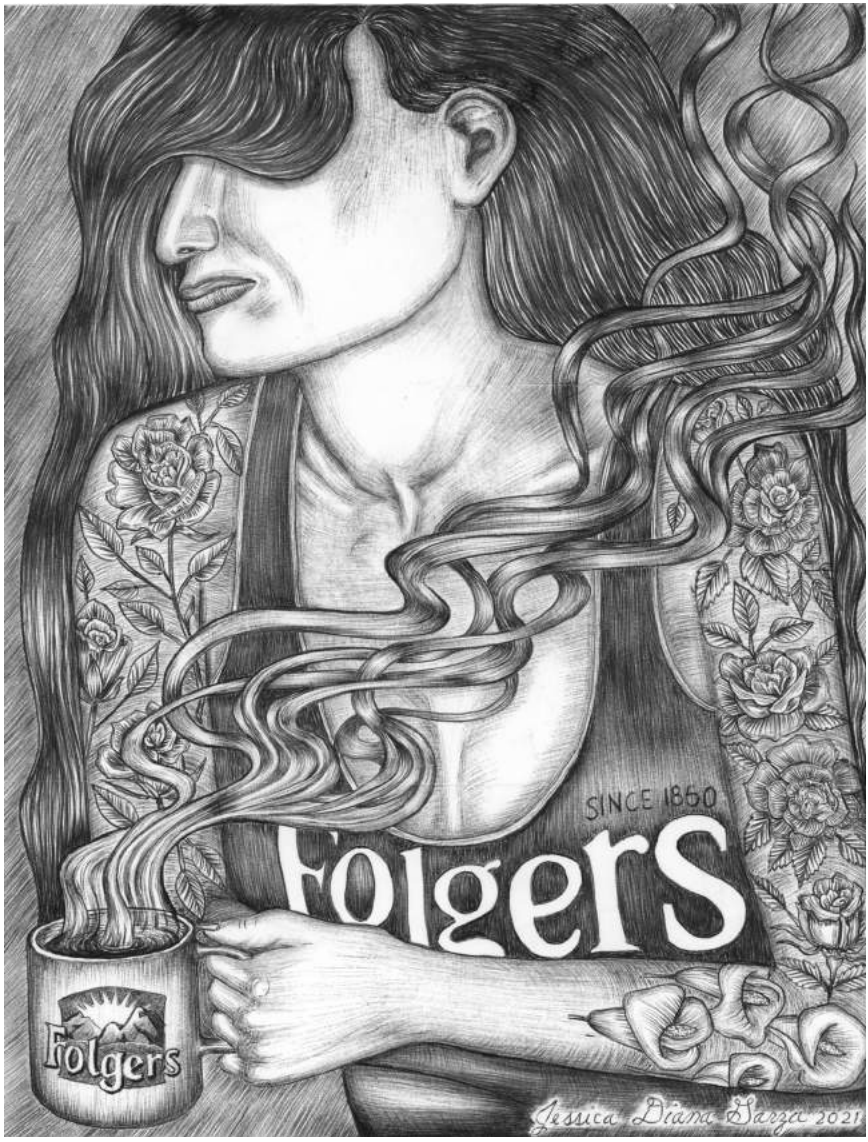
Shoulderin' Time

Imprisoned, entangled in my wrongs, twisted in barbed-wire.
Walls cracked n' drippin' in grime, the clock broken,
with no end in sight. Yellow rose in hand, hands up.
Handcuffed, chained by time, smothered in tattoo'd black
roses. Prison bars weep where she sleeps in her cell.
Prisoners moan, from janglin' of prison guard keys.
Bad men ride an olden-time grey goose bus,
She's shoulderin' time, at the end of her decline.

JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Shoulderin' Time pen and ink on paper

Confusion and Comfort

Aside from the animals, two other comforts Ms. Garza has in prison are her memories of coffee and butter. In the case of butter, she occasionally is able to obtain a small hard-to-find yellow cube. *—RB*



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: Black Coffee pen and ink on paper

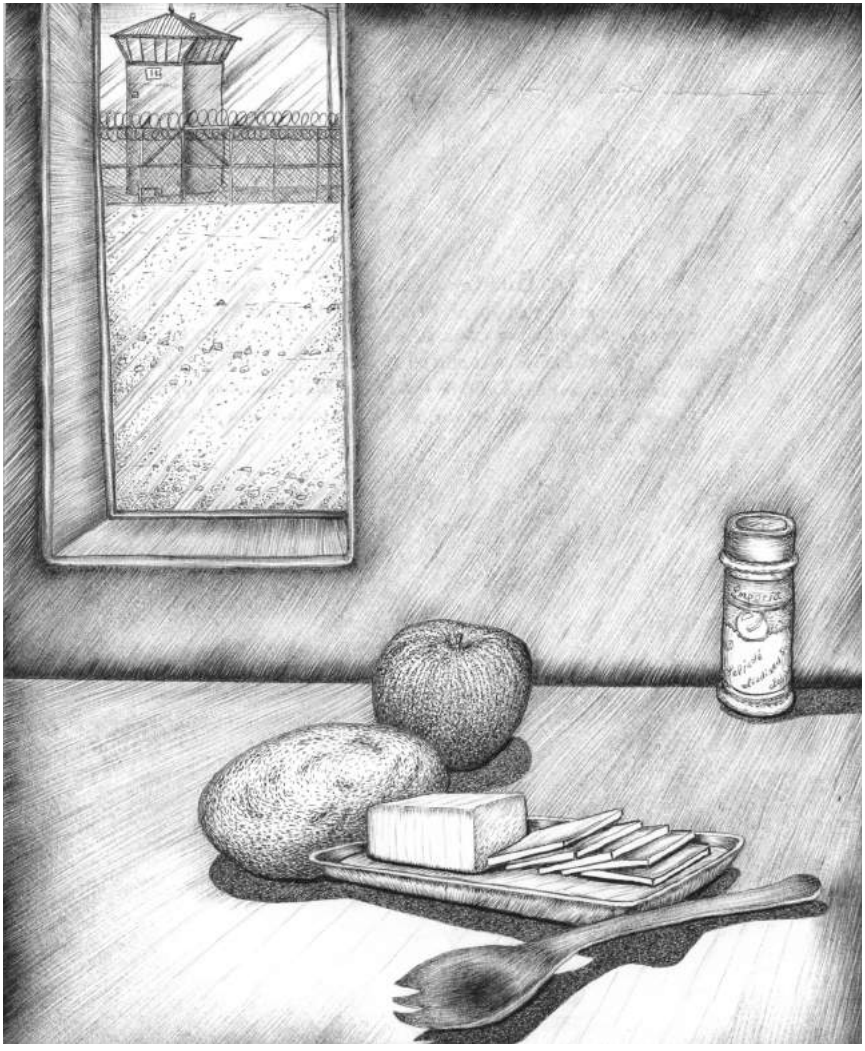
Coffee Poem

Off the highway at *The Backwoods Cafe*, sharing coffee, its delicious aroma.

Espresso, latte art, or simply black, *coffee*, the simplest thing, is precisely why it's so complex. Work of art in French vanilla, pink roses in swirls of vines, and the cup's French curl finger stem. As the waitress pours another cup, I radiate caffeine. What a delicious jolt of fresh hot coffee! my gentle blow to cool a sip; the cafe's French song, "La Vie en Rose"; French sidewalk cafes, glasses; and Paris, rose-colored always.

Prison, on the other hand, is always grey. Time passes slowly, and the coffee dominates my mood. Give me a morning cup of java! its alarm clock bossiness will awake me to the prison day. Spilling a hot cup of coffee on my lap I yell, jump up! The way I drink coffee here is really fast, lest an unliked inmate asks me for a drink.

My old prison coffee cup is made of tin, stained and dented from rattling the bars whenever the guards act up. Prison-kitchen coffee, made with chickory, makes for a bitter cup of coffee, so unlike your fancy sugar with cream. The prison coffee I drink is black.



JESSICA DIANA GARZA: A Buttery Lullaby pen and ink on paper

A Buttery Lullaby

Early morning light shines butter-oil yellow through the thin slice of escape-proof window.

Prison rules strictly dictate only small rations of sunlight, holding to a greedy scene of the ever unreachable outside world.

While the mean hot sun attacks the closet-sized prison cell, like a hot knife through soft butter, the prison desert refuses to be any kinder, threatening to melt my hard-to-find-in-prison yellow cube of butter.

Butter holds fond memories for me. My dear grandmother, who was much like Julia Child, cooked her precious butter into most everything. A healthy dollop of butter on toast was my grandma's solution to most of life's ills.

On my first day living with my grandma, she cooked one of my favorite childhood breakfasts: butter-fried French toast with an extra-large pat of butter on top. And that came completely drenched in Log Cabin syrup. On the side, she made butter-fried scrambled eggs. Yes, more butter…lots of butter.

In the olden days, butter was a staple in most every happy home. For lunch, my grandma cooked me corn on the cob, drenched in butter and salted. Or sometimes she'd make a toasty, delicious, grilled-cheese sandwich, fried in butter. The golden yellow so wondrous.

An imprisoned woman is glad to have a piece of bread slathered in butter, causing sweet joy to unfurl like a buttercup at dawn.

Butter reminds me of when I was a child. Of a young life seasoned with butter. Of better times.

❖

You can see in my drawing the kind of spoon we inmates are issued. It's an orange plastic rubbery type of "spork." And that's the salt an inmate bought for me. And the inmates give me apples because they know I use the apples to make pies. I've invented my own sweet recipe, where I use oatmeal as filler. I use rice, butter, bananas, nuts, raisins, and cupcakes. And it comes out pretty good. So I added the apple to the artwork. In fact, just a minute ago, two inmates gave me two apples so I could make another pie. And my next door neighbor gave me a bag of rice.

JESSICA DIANA GARZA: War Came Calling pen and ink on paper

War Came Calling | *Jessica Diana Garza*

War came calling when I was a child.
What could a child know of war?

Smell of beer, drunkened, angry words,
ready to blow up, Ka-Boom!
Smell of sweat and blood, of fear.
Red welts, blue-black bruises, a fat lip.

We children looked upward for help,
saw a sky startled by the fight.
Who, we asked, intervenes in wars?

A time when war came overseas, to rice fields
and jungles. It colored red the army of green
locusts where the helicopters landed.
Their swirling blades mimicked the jungle's
rapidly firing bullets. Pow! Pow! Rat-a-tat-tat!

Soldiers mowed down never came home;
a favorite uncle, called to war in Viet Nam.

While fathers' voices thundered at home,
shaken, awakened children ran and hid
in closets, crawled under beds.

The child I was so long ago lay in the dark
trembling, when war came calling.

Mirror reflectioned prison bars on darkly
shaded glasses hide my pin-pupiled eyes,
that grew up too fast, where war came calling.

Portrait of an Undocumented Now Essential Worker | *Susan Florence*

Salinas Valley, California April 2020

Rosa stoops low with the sun
sets the short-handled hoe down
shifts from beds of broccoli rows
to the rattletrap company bus
on the side of the field road.

Wrapping a white bandana
she masks her face
pulls on two pairs of gloves
latex, then cloth, keeps her space
in the line that forms.

Catching corona virus
is not her only concern
now empty store shelves
stand clean of staples,
picked like fields culled of crops,

basics for burritos that sustain
Rosa and her daughter Luz
keep them to routine
good health through harvest
and days hunched over

ten hours of dust
as wet marine layers lift into sun
shoulder to shoulder
then the bus to barracks on the 101
in Salinas, *the salad bowl of the world.*

Skeleton Crew, Point Reyes, CA | *Charles Atkinson*

Ye have to go out but ye don't have to come in.
—Retired Motto, U.S. Life Saving Service

A century ago they'd launch from Great Beach
into the teeth of winter storms—seven weathered
men outfitted each with life-jacket and oar.
Those ten-foot oars flailed, upturned spider legs,
till the boat punched through overhead breakers.

❖

Re-built the boathouse on sheltered Drake's Bay
with a cradle on rails that rolled the lifeboat—
motorized now—into the water. All
young men—Finns, Swedes, Germans . . .
—roughing out a life in a harsh new world.

❖

Thanksgiving Eve, 1960—the *Jane Ruth* radios
Six-foot swells…Sunset Shoal!
Two guardsmen answer the call, slip
hawsers off the cleats, ease the cradle
down the ramp. God bless the diesel . . .

❖

Crackle from the trawler: *Jane Ruth—secured!*
Lifeboat radios its ETA to the station.
Guardsmen set a watch: one's awake all night.

❖

Morning searchers find the boat upright,
bobbing in surf, miles from Great Beach,
purring—without the surf-men. A week,
and one's washed up; a month, the second.
Station log's left blank—it's almost Christmas.

No, they're not real, Robert says.

Then why are they here in the bathtub with me, gasping, turning,
trying to swim—
angelfish, clownfish, triggerfish, parrotfish.

The bathtub is pink. The water, soapy and gray.
They are not living and they are not dead
but somewhere in between.

I try to stay still. When I move it churns the water.
My job is to save the too many and I must keep the water calm.

Which shall I save first?
I try to scoop them up. To bring them…where? They glide through
my fingers, elusive.
They come from a clear crystal blue, the ad says. Yes, that's where
they come from.

Across the hall the foreign exchange student opens and closes his
door saying sorry sorry
over and over. The door, his mouth, like the gills of the fish.

I can't climb out. I can't leave the fish and there's nothing to cover me.
I don't even know whose house we're in.

Wild Ride | *Rose Black*

The No. 20 streetcar raced along the bluff above the C & O Canal on its way to Cabin John. City dwellers called it a wild ride, perhaps because of the wilderness along these stretches, or perhaps because here the driver picked up speed, tossing nervous passengers from side to side. We riders had to hold on. For extra fun the conductor let teenage boys take turns driving.

Paw Paw tunnel flickered the face of a dead man right at its entrance, beckoning.

But the real wild ride was the rollercoaster at Glen Echo, our destination. After a few small dips it would climb way up then when it stopped high at the top there'd be a sudden jolt and backwards lurch. For one second everything so still. We'd hold our breath as we peered down the deep descent. Our little car could be flung off into space and we'd all be smashed to pieces.

Going home on the No. 20 I saw stars, the Milky Way. It didn't matter if I missed my stop, because in those days I could find my way back. The wild ride would become a weaving, a rocking, a clickety clickety, as I stepped off again, and again, into the cold, turbulent night.

Cutting the Trees | *Amber Coverdale Sumrall*

Morning is grey with rain.
Three persimmons glow on the bare tree,
forgotten lanterns. Nuthatches and juncoes
have left suddenly, in search of warmer skies.
Your sadness fills our cold house. The two maples
you took down lie together in a tangle of branches.
You cannot bear to take the axe to them.
It was necessary, you say, they were blocking light,
leaning over the springhouse, the creek.
You carry firewood in, exchange one element
for another, seek pardon in the burning.

Again, Her | *Amber Coverdale Sumrall*

Trees and wires down, phone dead, road closed.
A woodpecker's hollow staccato in the oak tree.

I stumble through a minefield of memories,
summoning ghosts, grief rising faster than guilt.

My mother's last words. *No. No. No.*
Wet gauze, tears bleeding through.

Whose life did she live? Not one
she would have chosen for herself.

Her sadness, a persistent shadow,
my father's cruelty a lifelong curse.

Rain spears the emerging narcissus,
turns the placid creek into a swollen river.

The way back, *before*, is impassable.
In the grey heart of this storm, the crows

can be heard above the thunder,
reciting the hundred names

they have for darkness, for light.
Again, I let her go.

How to Make a Smaller Life | *Lisa Allen Ortiz*

Trade your mortgage for an RV
the headline said, but it didn't work.

Their lungs, for instance, couldn't fit inside.
Every breath she said

and pressed her hands above her knees.
He saw that she was right. He'd read that

even Caesar's breath swirls now in every lung.
Mountains are formed this way—

by lifting up what was lying down for years.
I guess it's all too much, he said.

Her head was province size. His hips were
two sputniks that blinked across the night. *Additionally*

there's this she said and undid the buttons of her shirt.
Inside, the same familiar heart overgrown with time

its massive caverned temples, its
valves with tubes and traps.

It's complicated she said and ran her finger
down his monstrous spine.

They stood beside the fold-down metal step,
the narrow door—

the border of what they wished to leave behind
and what they couldn't bear to lose.

Imagine the smallest life of all, he said.
A cell. A molecule. A bone-white particle of ash.

Look what I packed, she said.
The driveway, the hedge, the sidewalk.

They stayed where they stood, each
holding the unbearable mass of the other

while somewhere south, a tiny silver airstream
meandered a lip of canyon road.

Impossible Bird | *Andrew Gent*

Not an actual bird
but a bird imagined
by someone who had "bird"
described to them
but never seen
in real life.

A wooden equivalent
three sizes too big
for the flowered branch
(also imaginary)
it sits on.

Oh, to be that bird!
Under a pink sky,
sheltered by sepia leaves
thinking a single thought:

I am bird.
Bird is

what I am,
what I have chosen
to become. To live

between the pages of a book
where the laws of science and evolution
are merely suggestions

like signs reading men at work
or clothing optional.
Its bright red head
out of all proportion

to its miniature green wings
and enormous body.
Flight is a fiction

only it believes in.
And its call, if rumor
is to be believed,

is the most beautiful
thing you could imagine.

Sons and Daughters of the First Settlers | *Andrew Gent*

I like the museums
that are barely there:
open Thursdays 1:00–3:00
or alternate weekends.
Call for details. These are
the historical societies
of the sons and daughters
of every small village and town
in New England. The grande dames
and assorted offspring
and the houses they left behind.
Each has a cannonball
dug up from a field
or a piece of broken glass
taken from the farm house
of the only famous person
they can remember. This one
has a larger than life size
carved wooden eagle, complete
with nest, taken
from the top of the only hotel
in town. That one
has a ship model
the local banker kept
in his office to impress
the citizens. (Now stored
in the basement underneath the stairs.)
Someone's shoe. The handle
off the pump in the center of town.
A framed assortment of sailors' knots
each labeled and nailed in place.
I love every last bauble
that the past has left behind
and that we, in our wisdom,
have decided to record
in the crazy hope
those who follow
may some day
do the same for us.

Port Clinton, Ohio, Summer, 1963 | *Paul Kolhoff*

"Go away, children! We're praying in here." The nuns seemed to want to pray at the same times that we wanted to play. We would be in the middle of the game, and ferocious Sister John would whoosh out the back door, her black habit storming after.

So silent baseball was born. Crack of the bat, no problem. Hard throw over to first, the ball smacking the mitt, okay. But if you shouted to a teammate, that cost you a strike. If you razzed the batter, another strike. If you yelled at the spacey left fielder to throw the ball in, that cost you an out. It made for an interesting game. And in the silence we seemed to play better baseball.

After a few weeks, we were famous, with our pictures in the Port Clinton Herald. We played with great joy and intensity. But on one of our last days before school started, we lapsed. We sinned over a very close play at the plate. In fact, we were howling a number of grievances when a young nun, one none of us had ever seen, came out to quiet us. She didn't say a word, but bounced on her feet, like an athlete. She even picked up a spare bat and took a couple of swats. We inquired in a soft whisper if she would like to take a turn at the plate.

She whiffed the first couple of times, as if finding her sea legs, laughing noiselessly each time. The third time Peter served up a perfect whacker, a blessed egg, and she knocked it clean out of the playground and into the Kozlacks' vegetable garden.

She couldn't help but shout with a glee so pure it startled us. Catching herself, she covered her mouth, then touched her lips with a raised forefinger. She rounded the bases, laughing the whole time, all without a sound. Then waving goodbye, she slipped back into the convent.

As the school year began all of us wondered who would be so fortunate to be assigned this kind, funny nun who could smack home runs, but she didn't show up in anyone's classroom. In fact, we never saw her again.

Stacked | *D. J. Savarese*

Blueberries with laces—
the feet of the drowned.
Drowned, that is, in sugar.
"Batter up!" says the pancake umpire.
"It's a double. No, a triple!
No, he's stealing home!"
The game is stacked against you.
A girl once died in a pancake eating contest.
Digestion's never on the house.
The sneakers like the blue of the gas stove's flame,
little violets on a hillside,
trekking into the full hereafter.

INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN KUUSISTO

RED WHEELBARROW: *Steve, your 2020 collection from Tiger Bark Press,* Old Horse, What Is to Be Done, *is your third full-length collection of poems.* Only Bread, Only Light *(2000) and* Letters to Borges *(2013) appeared from Copper Canyon. You are an activist, public speaker, and busy writer of creative nonfiction and fiction; your novel is in the works. In what way is poetry a distinct sanctuary where you are more free of the body of the respondent culture, and able to fully invent the world as an act of daily survival? I'm also reminded of your long interest in journaling.*

STEPHEN KUUSISTO: Poetry is the precursor to all the other arts. One can imagine chanting in the caves at Altamira. When the world is "too much with me" I slow down and enter what Auden called the "cave of making," which is a lyrical and slow space. It's inside all of us, it's just that the poet has learned how to find that evanescent and invisible grotto. A few years ago I taught a course on poetry as meditation. Students were invited to find the peace of artful imagination. I remember in particular one woman who'd never heard Bach. She went to the library, put on headphones, and her world was forever changed. That's the rediscovery of the ancient caves.

RW: *Also…if you can find a kinetic peace in poetry, as I think you do—a kind of "truth,"or what Ilya Kaminsky has called "clarity"—through the "I" of this persona—then how much does it matter exactly what your reader finds? You've circumscribed the physics of a little universe. That should be enough. The poems create possibilities. The poems have the thrill of treasure maps. Would you agree? They also acknowledge a cultural locus.*

SK: I love this term "kinetic peace" because it suggests that truth can be both inside the body and outside at the same time. Years ago I wrote a short poem entitled "Mandelstam," which acknowledges what you call a cultural locus—Osip Mandelstam was a Russian modernist poet who was murdered by Stalin. His own poems were sharp lyrical arrows and spoke of the urgency of living, especially in very dark times. In a moment of political distress I wrote the following:

Mandelstam

The age, the beast came home tonight,
The oak leaves torn in holy disorder.

There was a wheel, a rolling fire;
There was a street;

It swelled with bronze and sadness.
I can be trusted: here are the crumbs

Of my earth and freedom.

Anyway, what I was after was a fierce clarity that might be my own universe but which I suspected others must feel. We are vulnerable, beautiful, loving, and threatened all at once.

RW: *There are a few signal lines in the book I'm wondering if you want to talk about. Please pick a few or all of them—and then talk about both the line and some story or context that might matter to us. Please feel free to say very little or a lot. Or skip what you want to skip. Of course, all of our readers need to read the full book. These lines need their poems. But I'm moved by lines—a sort of Straw for the Fire effect, or a bricolage effect—a gathering of fragments exploring motifs related to music, political survival, aging, loneliness, poetry, blindness, and the place of beauty within all this. For example: you write, "It's an understatement to say I'm tired."*

SK: I often think when people say they're tired they mean something much deeper. James Joyce observes in one of his stories in *Dubliners* that Evie was tired. We know it's much more profound than that. Hemingway called this the "iceberg theory" of writing—we see only the top of the thing and the hidden reality is the true story.

RW: *"I love the Jesus who lets me stay blind"*

SK: I was happy when I wrote this line. We're all treated with grace and not everything has to be cured.

RW: *"It's a Mozart morning—not all of them are—"*

SK: Do you ever have a moment when suddenly there's Mozart or Bob Marley on the radio and it's the perfect thing? And that sends you into a lively and inventive day...

RW: *"The years of my childhood trembled, the hours were green. I lay in the garden in the wet light of summer and listened to the songs of rhubarb and thistles."*

SK: I had a lonesome childhood, which, strictly speaking, should be a matter of sadness but it gave me the opportunity to absorb the provincial beauty of the woods that surrounded our New Hampshire house. I got to know the toads quite well.

RW: *Here's one: "I need, like most writers, to keep a blank page in one room, the mind in another."*

SK: This is the kind of line I write when I'm being obscurely funny. I have to admit I don't know precisely what this means but I "think" it suggests that not all writerly impulses should be written down immediately. It's a contraposition to the old Jack Kerouac idea that your first thought is your best thought.

RW: *Or about blindness: "There are lots of blind people my age / Who don't much like themselves. / Zig-zag lines of darkness / Make you (on the inside) drift like a leaf"*

SK: Of course there are lots of anyones my age or your age who don't like themselves. Blindness is not a precursor to self-loathing and I suppose one could read the line this way. That's a risk one takes. I could get my comeuppance from blind activists who'd say I'm metaphorizing blindness as a sadness. But it's also true that I've worked at a famous guide dog school and disability produces acculturated identity despair, which is painful to behold. Self-contempt should be in a museum.

RW: *"You can discuss Helen Keller / But you can't say what words / Perform on the inside. // Have you seen a cormorant / Enter the sea? That's my Helen Keller— / That falling…."*

SK: Helen Keller was a deep mind. Not a poster.

RW: *"I'm always at lethal intersections."*

SK: I cross streets with a trained dog who knows how to prevent me from getting killed. But I don't have the luxury of taking streets for granted.

RW: *Music is everywhere in this book: "Mahler's Fifth / Never got over it. / Seven years old. / Gramophone. Winter."*

SK: For me Mahler's Fifth is his greatest symphony. It's an understatement to say I never got over it. But yeah, I never got over it.

RW: *" 'Embraceable You'—Bill Evans"*

SK: Bill Evans's piano work is so stunning, once you hear it, you have to lie down.

RW: *"Up and down the museum stairs above the physical museum. That's the ticket."*

SK: Again, this is one of those lines where I'm being obscurely funny—or I'm trying to be so. When we're moved by something in the museum one thinks of a Platonic museum above where the divine forms are.

RW: *"I wonder if I can stick to one thought, like a hunting dog."*

SK: I can't.

RW: *"It's important to know what you love, especially the small things."*

SK: For me this is often at the core of poems.

RW: *"…and when I'm very close I hear the man talking gently, so quietly he's like the ancient father we all long for, the horse father."*

SK: Men and women talking to animals—that's the origination of speech. We're right back to that cave in Altamira.

RW: *"Have I mentioned his neck? / It's long as Noah's hope / For new sun—"*

SK: If a horse's neck is indeed a product of evolution isn't it a product of hope?

RW: *"The boy in me spins— / How to take him with me / As years advance? // Paavo Haaviko: / "I hear a happy tale, it makes me sad: / no-one will remember me for long."*

SK: I admit I'm informed by melancholy in my reading and writing. But there's still a pre-melancholic in all of us.

RW: *Here is one of the book's short poems:*

Ode

What did it cost me to wake this morning?
My nation's history is a dark river.
If I am one of the saved, still swimming,
Who can I reach out to?
I do not want to be ashamed of the shore.

SK: Those of us who live and write in the United States know that our nation is a toxic and unjust place. How do we survive this with our souls intact? For me that's the ultimate political and spiritual question.

RW: *"If you know me you'll not be surprised // If you know me you too will be honest."*

SK: Emotional candor is important to me. I don't mean harming people with gossip but truth telling matters. I love Christopher Hitchens's book *Letters to a Young Contrarian*. Certainly as a disability rights activist I often have to ruin the tenor of a conversation in which the disabled are being left out.

RW: *"Language is a jacket you're not cold in."*

SK: This might not be true but it felt good saying it!

RW: *"Schopenhauer's aphorism: / 'Man can do what he wills / But he cannot will what he wills.'"*

SK: And yet, poets sure do try!

RW: *Early this year, you also published a collection of poems in conjunction with Ralph James Savarese in which you dialogue back and forth, responding to one another's poems with your own poems. You and Ralph created a unique, very funny book during the height of COVID and Trump. Can you remind us again of the name of that collection and where it is available? The poems, like the friendship, are political, compelling and honest. I heard you call the book "raunchy" once, I believe.*

SK: The book is called *Someone Falls Overboard* and it's certainly unique. Ralph Savarese is a wonderful poet and scholar who teaches at Grinnell College in Iowa. He has an "invisible" disability—an autoimmune condition which is actually quite serious. The pandemic was and *is* deadly for everyone but it's especially lethal to people with preexisting conditions. As for me, I've had pneumonia more than once. The prospect of getting COVID

seemed to me like a ticket to Hades. So, the two of us, aging disabled men, decided to write back and forth to each other in short poems. The book is unlike anything I've ever done—hot, jazzy, irreverent, terrifying and tender by turns. This is because Ralph Savarese is a profoundly inventive poetry colossus! We really did accomplish something. The book is available from Nine Mile Press.

RW: *Would you tell us about the origin of the poem printed here in RW 2021, "Five Prose Poems with Lines Stolen From James Tate"—and about what Tate means to you? Tate died in 2015. Tom Lux and Bill Knott are both gone now as well, two of Tate's great friends. Old Horse acknowledges literary ancestors, including Tate, Jaarko Laine, Penti Saarikovski, Anselm Hollo, Tomás Tranströmer, Marvin Bell, Donald Justice, Robert Bly, Federico García Lorca, and others.*

SK: James Tate remains a beloved poet for many and of course he created a space for young poets to play with surrealism—images that don't belong together suddenly side by side. In one of his early poems entitled "It's Not So Much the Heat as the Humidity," he opens with these lines:

> Only a dish of blueberries could pull me
> out of this lingering funk.
> I'm tired of taking the kids down
> to watch the riot, no longer impressed
> with fancy electrical nets, sick
> of supersonic nightsticks.

I love the improbability and clarity of this. And in my prose poems I'm essentially riffing off of this quality in Tate's work. The poems are an homage. I loved his work so very much and still do.

RW: *One other thing: what is this I hear about a Guggenheim, and what will you do with it? Something about a year of listening? And traveling?*

SK: Yes I intend to visit Santa Cruz as soon as I feel safe flying on a jetliner across country.

RW: *As Ilya Kominsky said in his blurb, "*Old Horse, What Is to Be Done *is a beautiful, unrelenting, moving book. It is a book to live with. I love it." We feel the same way.*

SK: I love *Red Wheelbarrow* and I'm proud to be part of your village!

All Hallows' Eve | *Charles Atkinson*

Who wouldn't unlatch the gate for an upright
crocodile cradling its tail in the dust?

All-night bonfires, carved gourd-heads—
the undead need their night above ground.

A gaggle of kids, braces sparkling,
boys strapped with plastic Kalashnikovs.

The biggest raps the bell with his barrel,
shoves the smallest to the front of the pack.

Sequined gowns, a rubber tarantula,
jellied eyeballs slide from a pocket,

fake blood drools on a shoe,
finger-bones paw a forearm.

Some masked toddlers start to
whimper: it's cold. They mill like ants,

unmoored from dull homes, to drift,
ghosts unclaimed for an evening.

One treat's plenty—mom shepherds
the pod past a mounded bowl.

The reminder's ignored—that's the pact:
tonight it's sugar, glitter and gore.

Quiet Snow at the Window | *Rosie King*

Through a creaked door,
step down into the cool of the root cellar,
wooden crates, fragrance
of MacIntosh—tart—
Northern Spy—for pies.

But hooray, all winter long,
more Delicious
Red and when out of Red,
Golden,
for after school,
a lapful
in the big leather chair in the study.

Near their seed centers,
each translucent
bright green star
a sweetness you could count on,

like the chair's soft leather,
the book.

CONTRIBUTORS

Almenaa Ali was born in Baghdad in 2000. Her father is a calligrapher, and her family loves poetry and art. Her poem "God Forbid" includes the lines: "You don't know anything about my sins, / how I sleep with the lust of clouds, / how the night reddens my leaves, / how I hug the blind wind."

Sam Ambler's writing has been published in *Christopher Street*, *The James White Review, City Lights Review Number 2*, and *Visitant*, among others. He won the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*'s 6th Annual Poetry Contest. He earned a BA in English, specializing in creative writing of poetry, from Stanford University. He delivered singing telegrams and sang with the Temescal Gay Men's Chorus in Berkeley and the Pacific Chamber Singers in San Francisco. He has worked in nonprofit theater at Berkeley Rep, Geffen Playhouse, Actors' Equity, and The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. Now retired, he lives in California with his husband, visual artist Edward L. Rubin.

Jacie Andrews is a young poet born and raised in Springfield, Arkansas, and a graduate of Hendrix College. Her work focuses on the silences surrounding issues of womanhood, sexuality, and artistry in the rural South, while also exploring the vernacular in hopes of highlighting such silence and, in turn, disassembling it. She is the recipient of the NFSPS Florence Kahn Memorial Award and the author of the chapbook *Sweetwork*. She plans to attend Indiana University in the fall to pursue an MFA in creative writing.

Charles Atkinson has authored three full-length poetry collections published by Hummingbird Press, and four national prize–winning chapbooks, as well as several awards for individual poems. He taught writing at UC Santa Cruz for 30 years, and continues to live and write near Santa Cruz, California, with his wife, Sarah Rabkin.

Li Bai, together with this friend Du Fu, was one of China's greatest and most beloved poets. A poet of the Tang dynasty, he was born in 701 and died in 762. Though his poems often have a dream-like quality, Li celebrated nature and friendship, and quite frequently, the pleasures of drinking. An often-repeated story relates that while drunk, Li Bai reached into a river to embrace the moon and was drowned.

Rose Black lives and works at Renaissance Stone, a sculpting studio in East Oakland. Her poetry has been widely published and she is the author of three books: *Clearing*, *Winter Light*, and *Green Field*. Her first two books are included in Yale's Beinecke Library for the Yale Collection of American Literature. Rose teaches poetry at Salinas Valley State Prison and is one of the founders of Right to Write Press, a nonprofit that promotes the growth of emerging writers who are incarcerated in California state prisons.

Originally from western Pennsylvania, **Anthony Botti** lives in Boston, Massachusetts with his partner and their pug, Puck, and works in healthcare management. His poetry has appeared in *The Comstock Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Cider Press Review*, *The Rockford Review*, *Blueline*, *Chiron Review*, *Flint Hills Review*, and *Mudfish*.

Janine Certo is the author of *Elixir*, winner of the New American Poetry Prize and the Lauria/Frasca Poetry Prize (New American Press and Bordighera Press, 2021). A winner of Nimrod's Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, her poems appear or are forthcoming in *The Cincinnati Review, The Greensboro Review, Poetry Northwest*, and *Shenandoah*. She is an associate professor at Michigan State University. Visit her at janinecertopoet.com.

Susan Cohen is the author of two chapbooks and two books: *Throat Singing* (WordTech, 2012) and *A Different Wakeful Animal* (David Martinson-Meadowhawk

Prize, Red Dragonfly Press, 2016). Her poems have appeared in *Catamaran, PANK*, *Prairie Schooner, Southern Review,* and *32 Poems*, and recently won the annual poetry prize from Terrain.org and second place in Cutthroat's Joy Harjo Awards. She has an MFA from Pacific University and lives in Berkeley, California.

Jessica Cohn's poems appear in *California Fire & Water: A Climate Crisis Anthology*, *Rattle*, and in numerous other journals and outlets. For a list of credits, you can visit her Authors Guild page at jessicacohn.net. She is a long-time writer and editor but happiest to be called a poet.

Mackenzie Cole's work has recently appeared in *Willow Springs, Whiskey Island, Pacifica Literary Review, Ghost Town*, and the *Sonora Review*. It has also been included in the collaborative anthology *They Said*, and you can also find an extended poem, "Notes to my Stepfather," in Oxidant | Engine's second box set collection. Mackenzie lives in Missoula, Montana, and has an MFA from the University of Montana.

David Denny's fiction has recently appeared in *Narrative, New Ohio Review*, and *Catamaran*. His books include *Sometimes Only the Sad Songs Will Do, The Gill Man in Purgatory*, and *Some Divine Commotion*. More information: www.daviddenny.net.

Bob Dickerson has published poems in *Tarantula, Beet Magazine*, and *The Coffee House Papers* and was a featured Poet of the Week for Nomadic Coffee. He has also collaborated with the New York artist Karen Hatch to create the bestselling objet d'art *Woodsman*. Avant-garde bookmaker Roger Berger has assembled a museum-quality volume of several of Bob's works entitled *Selected Poems and Other Oddities* (Reece Brothers Publications, Tirane, Albania). Accompanied by singer-songwriter Ina Johnson on the banjo, Dickerson has performed his poetry at Flash Fiction Forum, Kim Addonizio's annual Poetry Salon, Peninsula Literary Society, the fabulous Willow Glen Library, the Stoneham Jazz House Concert Series, Peter Kline's Cafe Bazaar Writer's Salon, and the annual Beat Poetry Reading at the Beat Museum in San Francisco, and on street corners throughout this great land of ours. He is currently putting together a book of new poems with the working title *Bring Me the Typewriter of Jesus Ponderosa*.

Rebecca Faulkner is a London-born poet, children's rights advocate and climate activist. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Smoke Magazine, Wild Roof Journal, Pedestal Magazine, The Maine Review, On the Seawall*, and *Into the Void*, among others. She was anthologized in the *Best New British and Irish Poets 2019–2021,* and has been nominated for the *Best of the Net Anthology 2021*, published by Sundress Publications. Rebecca was a 2021 poetry fellow at the Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts. She holds a BA in English literature from the University of Leeds and a PhD in cultural studies from Birkbeck College, University of London. Rebecca currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, and is working on completing her first collection of poetry.

Susan Florence's career has been writing and illustrating gift products and 30 gift books for many years. But it is the creative process of poetry that keeps her profoundly connected to herself—finding ground, especially during these uncertain and difficult times.

Jessica Diana Garza's poetry and artwork were extensively featured in the 2016 *Red Wheelbarrow Literary Magazine: The Writer's Life*. Her cover artwork for this issue was titled *Bird Bath*, and the magazine is available at the Right to Write Press web site: www.righttowritepress.org. Ms. Garza's subject material ranges from boxing to soup kitchens, from drugs to the transgender experience. She often looks outside her prison window to record the expressive sparrows and squirrels, the occasional flower.

Andrew Gent lives in New Hampshire, where he works as a writer and information architect. His first book, *[explicit lyrics]*, won the Miller Williams Poetry Prize and is available from the University of Arkansas Press.

Jean Harper is a writer in the Midwest. Her books include *Rose City: A Memoir of Work* and the forthcoming *Still Life With Horses*. Her writing has appeared in *The Florida Review, North American Review, Iowa Review, Harpur Palate, Yemasee Review* and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Indiana Arts Commission, has been a Scholar in Residence at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and has been in residence at Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

Stephanie L. Harper is a recently transplanted Oregonian living in Indianapolis, Indiana. Harper is the author of the chapbooks *This Being Done* and *The Death's-Head's Testament*. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Slippery Elm Literary Journal, Whale Road Review, Isacoustic*, Panoply, Neologism Poetry Journal, North Dakota Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Samantha Hsiung is a student from Cupertino, California. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Passengers Journal, The Rising Phoenix Review, Eunoia Review*, and *Cosmonauts Avenue*, among others. Besides writing, she enjoys fencing, reading, playing the piano, and listening to music.

Meng Hui was born in 1987, in Jiang Xi province. In May 2009, he won a poetry award from Peking University, graduated from East China Jiaotong University, and is now a journalist.

Larry D. Jones has been a writer in the Salinas Valley State Prison EOP Poetry Workshop for several years. His novel *Reality of a Spiritual Kind* was published by the Prisons Foundation and is available online at Prisonsfoundation.org. His poetry has appeared in *Red Wheelbarrow* and was read on Central Coast Poetry Shows on Santa Cruz Community TV. Mr. Jones's recent writing addresses civil rights, issues highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement, and COVID-19. He often reaches back into his past, weaving in rich images from work and childhood. He has recently become an experimenter in haiku and other short forms.

Karan Kapoor is a poet based in New Delhi. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Rattle, Atticus Review, The Indian Quarterly, The Bombay Literary Magazine, Scroll,* and elsewhere. Recently having finished his MA in literary art creative writing at Ambedkar University, he hopes to live a life devoted to poetry and music. You can find him at https://www.karankapoor.co.in/.

Paul Kolhoff lives in beautiful Richmond, Virginia, but planned to spend a large swath of time in what might be even beautifuller (should this be spelled with two "L's"?) Vienna before Covid19 stopped him at the airport. Best-laid were delayed, so he tutored his grand-nieces (who really are grand), and got married to his darling one (the beautifullest). It's all an attempt at art.

Rosie King grew up in Michigan. She went east for college and came to California in the sixties for graduate work. Her first two books, *Sweetwater, Saltwater* (2007) and *Time and Peonies* (2017), were published by Hummingbird Press. She's grateful for poems still arriving in the house by the beach where she first landed in Santa Cruz and for the poets in her writing group of many years.

Gillat Kol is a poet in Princeton, New Jersey, where she also specializes in computer science.

Stephen Kuusisto holds a university professorship at Syracuse and is the author of the memoirs *Have Dog, Will Travel: A Poet's Journey*; *Planet of the Blind* (a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year); and *Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening* and of the poetry collections *Only Bread, Only Light; Letters to Borges*; and *Old Horse, What Is to Be Done?* He travels and lectures widely on human rights, disability, literature, and the advantages of guide dogs and human-animal relationships. His website is: www.stephenkuusisto.com.

Nga Pi Kyaw is a very authentic Burmese side dish that is loved by everyone in that country. She lives in Yangon, the largest city in Myanmar. She is suffering from all the oppression.

K.T. Landon is the author of the chapbook *Orange, Dreaming* (Five Oaks Press, 2017). K. T.'s work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Spillway, North American Review*, *Narrative, Presence*, and *Best New Poets 2017*.

Merail Larth is a 24-year-old woman with big dreams from a small country called Lebanon. She graduated college at 20 years old and ever since has been working as an English teacher. She likes to write fiction and poetry.

Barbara Lawrence was born in San Francisco and has spent most of her life in the San Francisco Bay Area. She received her BA degree from San Francisco State University and an MA degree from San Jose State University. She taught life drawing and advanced painting at the Pacific Art League in Palo Alto and is currently painting full time in her studio in Santa Cruz. Barbara was the featured artist in the 2015 and 2017 landscape issues of the online *Artist Portfolio Magazine*. Juried shows Barbara has participated in include "I'll bet you can't paint a portrait—The Genesis of Bay Area Figurative Art Now" at the Art Space Gallery, San Francisco; "California Landscape of Dreams" presented by the Winfield Galley (Carmel); and "California" at Cabrillo College.

Retired literature and writing professor from Madison, Wisconsin, **Jean Lind** shares her inspiration from experiences as a hospice volunteer for 22 years in a poetry collection, *18 Rooms*. She turned toward visual art in the last decade and announced to a friend, "I'm all through with words," but her poems "keep happening anyway."

Wang Manliang is an associate professor of translation at Xi'an International Studies University, where he participated in the co-translation seminars held by Fulbright lecturer David Allen Sullivan. Wang introduced Sullivan tccmany contemporary Chinese poets, and is one of the co-editors of the anthology *Night is Ink to All Pens*.

Joanna Martin began writing poetry over 30 years ago after she moved to Santa Cruz, inspired by listening to words crash the jetty, humpbacks breach the secrets of the sea, the murmur of mermaids in dreams. Joanna has published two books of poetry with Hummingbird Press, *The Meaning of Wings* and *Where Stars Begin*. She has also had poems published in various literary magazines and anthologies including *Caesura*, *Porter Gulch Review, Monterey Bay Poetry, Harvest from the Emerald Orchard, Second Wind: Words and Art of Hope and Resilience,* and *phren-Z*.

David Massette's poetry has appeared in *Red Wheelbarrow* and was read on Central Coast Poetry Shows on Santa Cruz Community TV. He is a creative polymath. Among his many passions are astronomy, classical music, philosophy, great speeches, and the city he loves, San Francisco.

Milica Mijatović is a Serbian poet and translator. Born in Brčko, Bosnia and Hercegovina, she relocated to the United States, where she earned a BA in creative writing and

English literature from Capital University. She recently received her MFA in creative writing from Boston University and is a recipient of a Robert Pinsky Global Fellowship in Poetry. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in *The Louisville Review, Poet Lore*, *Consequence, Santa Clara Review, Barely South Review, Rattle*, and elsewhere.

Scott Miller, a polymath, paints vivid watercolors, gardens, makes books, writes songs, sings, plays guitar—yes, and more. Images reproduced here come from a series of pieces that are part of a new book in progress, to be finished around 2023: *The Planet that Was Off By One*. Of his art, Scott writes: "I like to make paintings that are interesting to look at, and that give the viewer's mind a new experience. Whenever my mind experiences something new and interesting, especially in a painting, in music, or in a story, my mind expands a little and and I can understand the world better." See his art and his music videos at www.waxmoth.com/.

Hikari Leilani Miya is a Japanese Filipina American, 2019 Cornell University English major graduate, and a current poetry MFA candidate at the University of San Francisco who identifies with the LGBTQ community. She is the assistant poetry editor for USFCA's literary magazine, *Invisible City*. She has publications forthcoming in *Cobra Milk* and *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, and in *Macguffin, Litbreak*, San Francisco City College's *Forum, Jet Fuel Magazine*, and the Canadian magazine *Fleas on the Dog*. She currently lives with her two snakes and disabled cat, but has a menagerie of other pets at home in the Central Valley of California. She is a behavioral therapist for children with autism, pianist, percussionist, and music arranger, as well as a competitive card game player.

Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo is a visual artist, poet, and teacher based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has exhibited her visual artwork across the United States and her poetry is published widely. Elizabeth earned a BFA in art (pictorial art) and a BA in French from San José State University. Elizabeth is a member of the board of directors of Poetry Center San José, manager of Roots Artist Registry, and editor of *La Raíz* magazine. She hosts "Palabras & Poetry: A Community Poetry-Writing Event Series" and is 2021 Creative Ambassador of the San José Office of Cultural Affairs.

Judith H. Montgomery's poems appear in the *Bellingham Review, Tahoma Literary Review, Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and *Healing Muse*, among other journals, and in a number of anthologies. Her first collection, *Passion*, received the Oregon Book Award for Poetry. Her fourth book, *Litany for Wound and Bloom*, was a finalist for the Marsh Hawk Prize, and appeared in August 2018 from Uttered Chaos Press. Her prize-winning narrative medicine chapbook, *Mercy*, appeared from Wolf Ridge Press in 2019.

Kim Nall is a poet and educator from Dallas, currently pursuing an MFA through Carlow University's low-residency program in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Dublin, Ireland.

Duan Nan was a graduate student at Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, and she participated in the graduate co-translation seminar.

Lisa Allen Ortiz's manuscript *Stem* is the recent winner of the 2021 Idaho Prize. Her poems have appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal* and *Colorado Review* and been featured on *Verse Daily*. She is co-translator of *The Blinding Star,* selected poems of Blanca Varela, released in 2021 from Tolsun Books, and her book *Guide to the Exhibit* won the 2016 Perugia Press Prize. She lives in Santa Cruz and she loves wandering around in the forest.

Nils Peterson is Professor Emeritus of English and Humanities at San Jose State University. He has published science fiction, several chapbooks, a memoir, and three collections of poetry. The last, *All the Marvelous Stuff*, was chosen as the best poetry book of the 2020 San Francisco Book Festival. In 2009, he was chosen to be the first poet laureate of Santa Clara County. Coleman Barks describes his poetry as "intelligent, lonely, funny and real. Necessary…."

David James "D. J." Savarese (www.djsavarese.com) is an artful activist, public scholar, and practicing optimist. His poems have appeared in the Peabody award–winning documentary *Deej: Inclusion Shouldn't Be a Lottery*; a digital chapbook, *A Doorknob for the Eye* (2017); a multiply-authored chapbook, *Studies in Brotherly Love* (Prompt Press); and various literary journals. A graduate of Oberlin College '17, he lives and teaches poetry writing in Iowa City.

Ralph James Savarese is the author of two books of prose and three books of poetry, including the recent *Someone Falls Overboard: Talking through Poems*, which he wrote with Stephen Kuusisto. He lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

Gary Snyder (born May 8, 1930) is an American man of letters. Perhaps best known as a poet (his early work has been associated with the Beat Generation and the San Francisco Renaissance), he is also an essayist, lecturer, and environmental activist with anarchoprimitivist leanings. He has been described as the "poet laureate of Deep Ecology." Snyder is a winner of a Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and the American Book Award. His work, in his various roles, reflects an immersion in both Buddhist spirituality and nature. He has translated literature into English from ancient Chinese and modern Japanese. For many years, Snyder was an academic at the University of California, Davis, and for a time served as a member of the California Arts Council. He has published over thirty books.

McTate "Bean" Stroman II is a spoken-word artist, guest lecturer and motivational speaker. Over the past 25 years he has had the opportunity to share his inspirational talents at such places as The World Stage in Leimert Park, The Comedy Store on Sunset, Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York, UCLA, USC, and San Jose State University.

Santa Cruz poet laureate **David Allen Sullivan**'s books include *Strong-Armed Angels, Every Seed of the Pomegranate*, a book of co-translation with Abbas Kadhim from the Arabic of Iraqi Adnan Al-Sayegh, *Bombs Have Not Breakfasted Yet*, and *Black Ice*. Most recently, he won the Mary Ballard Chapbook poetry prize for *Take Wing*, and published *Black Butterflies Over Baghdad* with Word Works Books. He teaches at Cabrillo College, where he edits the *Porter Gulch Review* with his students. He lives in Santa Cruz with his family. His website is https://dasulliv1.wixsite.com/website-1. His co-translated anthology of contemporary Chinese poetry, *Night is Ink to All Pens*, is searching for a publisher.

Amber Coverdale Sumrall has lived in Santa Cruz County since 1972. She is the author of *Litany of Wings* and *Refuge*, collections of poems, and has edited or coedited thirteen anthologies including *Storming Heaven's Gate: Spiritual Writings by Women*, and *Women of the 14th Moon: Writings on Menopause*. Her poems have been featured on The Writer's Almanac. For twenty-eight years she co-produced In Celebration of the Muse. She leads writing retreats in Big Sur, and travels often to Ireland, her home away from home. Her third collection of poems will be published in 2022.

Ubaldo Teque, Jr., is originally from Guatemala via Southern California. His poetry and prose have appeared in *Red Wheelbarrow, Pilgrimage*, and *Erotic Review*, and were read on Central Coast Poetry Shows on Santa Cruz Community TV. His first collection of poems and essays, *Niño Inmigrante*, was published in October 2020 by Right to Write Press. In addition to poetry, Ubaldo Teque, Jr., writes essays and memoir. He enjoys translation, and has translated many of his father's poems from Spanish to English.

Nye' Lyn Tho is an astrology enthusiast, commercial and conceptual photographer, and retoucher. Images from her manipulated photograph series "Natural Heir" (selections published here) have won several awards both in the U.S. and in the U.K. Since 2015, she has been working independently retouching for clients such as Uber Eats, Sephora, Vehicle SF, and Title Nine. In addition to this, she has worked with her own personal clients and small local businesses in the SF Bay Area and New York. Nye' consistently aims to uplift those who are often shunned in society. As a black gay woman she recognizes the constant need for positive self-reflections. Growing up with a very small view of people like her in media, in stories, or even products on the shelf, she seeks to help provide positive mirrors that she's craved since childhood. Since picking up a camera she has fed that hunger not only for herself but for people like herself.

Li Tu was a student at Xi'an International Studies University and now lives and works in Xi'an.

Vivian Underhill is a writer and poet living in Santa Cruz, California. She is also a doctoral candidate in feminist studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Preeti Vangani is the author of *Mother Tongue Apologize*, winner of the RL India Poetry Prize. Her work has been published in *The Threepenny Review, Gulf Coast* and *Cortland Review,* among other places. A graduate of University of San Francisco's MFA program, Preeti has received fellowships and support from Ucross, Napa Valley Writers' Conference, Pen America, and the California Center for Cultural Innovation.

Xiangyin is from Xi'an, in the Shaanxi province, and a graduate of XISU. His work has been published in *New Century Poetry.* He won prizes in the Xi'an youth poet seminar and in the Xinlu reading contest.

Yanwen Xu was born in Xuzhou, China. He now studies and writes at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Gary Young's most recent books are *That's What I Thought*, winner of the Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award from Persea Books, and *Precious Mirror*, translations from the Japanese. His books include *Even So: New and Selected Poems*; *Pleasure*; *No Other Life*, winner of the William Carlos Williams Award; *Braver Deeds*, winner of the Peregrine Smith Poetry Prize; *The Dream of a Moral Life,* which won the James D. Phelan Award; and *Hands*. A new book of translations, *Taken to Heart: 70 poems from the Chinese*, is forthcoming from White Pine Press. He has received grants from the NEH and NEA, and the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, among others. He teaches creative writing and directs the Cowell Press at UC Santa Cruz.

Mike Zhou was a student at Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, where he met translator David Allen Sullivan. Zhou became Sullivan's friend and travel companion. He now works as a teacher.