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Note: "Parentheses" indicate Poetry; *italics*, Fiction; Nonfiction is in plain text.

Editor's Note:

I can't wait to tell you about what's in store this issue! But first, you may have noticed that our layout has changed significantly. That is because of our new layout editor, John Nicholson. He has been with us only a short time, and as I'm sure you can see, he has already done fantastic things for the journal. Likewise, I'd like to welcome Alesha Dawson and John Abbott, poetry editors and general readers, to our staff. We are so excited to be growing and expanding, and we look forward to using the new submissions platform, Submittable.

Now, on to the issue at hand. This is our second summer in print, and we have so many wonderful authors to showcase, starting with our featured author, Karla Linn Merrifield, poet and editor of *The Centrifugal Eye*. We have an interview with her as well as a poem starting right on the next page! But don't go away just yet. I have many other fine works to introduce. As always, the thread which unites the tapestry of KR is environmental loss, and the following pieces all position themselves to deal with this in fascinating and related ways. One interesting way to talk about these works is as locations, each piece attempts to locate a self, to locate a place, or to unite self and place. This is so essential to understanding ecological loss as opposed to the loss of "nature," an outmoded concept which appears to be doing more harm to environments than good. Timothy Morton, a contemporary theorist whose work is absolutely necessary to understanding post-natural ecology, asserts that "[p]utting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman" (Morton 5). And these author's are far from such a phallicious fallacy.

In each of these works, the speaker attempts to inhabit a broken location, from Stephen Hartsfield's "A Good Fish" all the way to poems like Stefan Forrester's "Philosophia Natura." These works express the ecological thoughts of post-natural life. "Nature" is destroyed, or better, the illusion of nature is destroyed, and in the wake of such destruction we must learn to inhabit our de-forests and waste dumps alongside the sculpted parks and "pure" wilderness. Only then can we truly understand what it means to live in the world, as opposed to ruling over it; these writers reveal how we can best be a part of a biological community, instead of forever apart from an imagined natural other.

Thanks so much for reading, and as always:
may the Kudzu grow!

Cheers,

M.P. Jones
Editor-in-Chief

KARLA LINN MERRIFIELD, ON NATURE WRITING IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Below is an interview with award-winning poet, assistant editor for The Centrifugal Eye, and friend of Kudzu Review, Karla Linn Merrifield in which she shares her insight as a nature writer, an environmentalist, and as an editor. We thank her for offering her time and wisdom to the KR community.

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You have been writing place-conscious poetry for years. What is so important to you about ecopoems?

I think poetry touches readers in a way that no other environmental advocacy effort can – poetry reaches into the mind, the heart, and the spirit to move us to awareness of the beauty nature (of which we humans animals are very much a part) and nature’s fragility. Once we’re touched by armadillo antics or ghost orchid glory we are more receptive to other forms of advocacy. Read a really fine “nature poem” and it moves us to care. And once we care, we’re more likely to take action on behalf of the Earth, which is why I embarked on *THE DIRE ELEGIES: 59 Poets on Endangered Species of North America (TDE)*, the anthology I edited with my husband (FootHills Publishing, 2006). For example, it’s almost impossible not to be moved by William Heyen’s TDE poem, “Harpoon,” which opens: “Now that blue whales are as few as two hundred, / I want the last one dead.” Or W. S. Merwin’s TCE poem, “For a Coming Extinction,” in which he implores of a gray whale, “When you have left the seas nodding on their stalks/ Empty of you/ Tell him that we were made/ On another day.” The profundity of Heyen’s grief, of Merwin’s, envelopes the reader and, I think, makes us more receptive to pleas to save the whale, polar bear, rainforest diversity....

You have eight books to your credit. How long have you been writing?

Heavens, it’s been a long, long time, Madison. I wrote my first poem at age 11, which ended up being published in my junior-senior high school literary magazine. I haven’t stopped – and that was, um, 49 years ago! The momentum has increased over the years, too. Since I retired 10 years ago, I’ve been able to devote much more time to poetry. I find I “work” full-time and then some, whether writing or revising, editing, journaling, or thinking, thinking, thinking about ideas, lines, the trajectories of poems-to-be.

What fuels you, a passion for literature or a passion for environmentalism?

Both! They’re intimately intertwined. Certainly environmentalism took the lead when I compiled TDE. But, a passion for poetry is always there. There’s also my passion for the process of poetry. It’s revelatory. As I’m writing them,

my poems frequently surprise me and pull me off into a realm I had no idea I was headed toward. Thus, I turn a corner on a trail and there is a *Torreya* tree and it becomes the core of the poem “Orion Espies a Tree’s Demise,” which is my representative poem in TDE. Voila! I had no idea I’d end up writing about the pending extinction of that species of evergreen. The tree appeared. And delivered that poem. Happens all the time. I’m lucky, but then again, every poet with an eye to nature will get lucky.

How often do you write? Every day?

In one form or another I write every day. Almost every day starts with notes in a book of meditations on the poems I ritualistically read in bed with my first cup of coffee. One poem each day from four books of poetry selected somewhat randomly. Right now I’m relishing William Heyen’s new *The Football Corporations*, and Anne Whitehouse’s *The Refrain*, along with a pair of anthologies. A pleasant potpourri to spice up winter mornings and get the wheels spinning.

Most days I scribble in my traditional journal: lots of quotidian news but also notes toward new poems, including lines I don’t want to lose to a faulty memory; observations I’ve made; accomplishments; plans; dilemmas.... In the back of that journal, I draft my poems, which is not an every-day experience. I need “time alone” for that without interference from my beloved husband, email, phone calls, etc. I can usually count on some quiet time once or twice a week, and every three weeks to a month, I head off on a “Poetry Safari,” where I go camping overnight in my tent to write the night away for hours on end.

You have said before that you write under the philosophy that “poetry furthers the sacred.” Can you explore this notion a little bit for our readers? Do religious or spiritual teachings influence what is sacred in your work?

First, let me separate the religious from the spiritual. I am not religious and have a deep and abiding disdain for organized religion (think witch-burning, anti-choice neo-conservatism, etc.). I’m an atheist who adamantly deems any notion of a godhead as one more human tragedy: God is an invention to help people cope with their own natural mortality. If only the vast majority of *Homo sapiens sapiens* would just accept the fact: We humans are animals; we die just like the road-kill raccoons...and our molecules return to the Earth to become... Who knows? A few molecules of rock, a few of mackerel, a few of bristlecone pine....

But spiritual? Absolutely. And the source is nature. For example, yesterday while walking our condo grounds with my husband we heard and saw a handsome bird with a complex and thrilling repertoire of calls. Turns out he was a fork-tailed flycatcher, *Tyrannus savanna*, a “bird-first” for us, called an “accidental from Latin America.” It was a deeply spiritual encounter for me; I felt graced to be in its presence, felt both rapture and healing. And I’m still

feeling that afterglow. Quite simply, I felt wild within. Thoreau was right: “In Wildness Is the preservation of the world.” When we connect with nature, we are blessed, and that spirituality spills out into the world. Just think: If all of us felt as Roger and I did yesterday watching the flycatcher, there would indeed be peace on Earth, for all of us would have discovered the sacred—a sanctity that forbids war, social injustice, ecological destruction.

What is the first ecological experience you can remember?

Quite possibly it was when I was seven or eight at the Maryland shore with my parents, first encountering the power of the ocean in its wave and the wonder of sand crabs who burrow into the wet margins of land and water. And if it wasn't then, it was as a teenager hiking in Western New York with my boyfriend who showed me the beauty of partridge berries, bracket fungi, and the wild ramps that later went into a hearty stew. I'm still quite fond of bracket fungi, though I now leave them in situ on their nurse logs, taking only pictures.

What writers have most inspired you? Are there poets that you simply cannot stand?

As you might expect, there are the standard inspiring heroes— Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and big-time hero Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard entomologist who's taught us so much about the Earth's diversity and the need to preserve it. They're joined by poets William Wordsworth and Robert Frost (childhood inspirations courtesy of my mother); Gary Snyder; May Sarton, William Heyen (top o' the list); poet-friends Michael G. Smith, Wanda Schubmehl, M. J. Iuppa, Eve Hanninen, Beau Cutts, and Colleen Powderly; Patianne Rogers; Kenneth Pobo; Mary Oliver (in her pre-Jesus-loves-me mode); Jim Daniels; Dennis Fritzingler, Campbell McGrath...oh so many! I'm often wont to say: “Too many poets, not enough time.”

You blog under the name “Vagabond Poet.” How has radical variation from the norm influenced your creative work?

When I first returned from studying abroad in France as a college co-ed, I immediately demarcated my life into B.E. and A.E. – before Europe and After Europe – the experience so dramatically changed me. That was a summer of “radical variation from the norm”—from garlicky escargots to Michaelangelo's David to Mediterranean jellyfish stings and an Adriatic urchin's needle-stabs—that set the stage for a lifetime of vagabondage. Call me an experience junkie, if you will, but it's when I step outside my quotidian life that broad, sweeping pathways to poetry unfurl, most often through wondrous revelations from nature. I can become a blue-footed booby inhabiting the Galapagos or a chinstrap penguin on the coast of Antarctica.

What experiences have shaped you as a writer?

Geez, Madison, the answer to that could fill a book! But at the top of the list is “our best trip ever,” a two-week dory-boat journey down the Colorado River

some 15 years ago. One day we'd hiked up the Little Colorado for an innocent swim in a turquoise travertine pool. Suddenly I was swept away by the invisible current, my body bashed against coarse limestone boulders, desperate for a gasp of air. Obviously I lived to tell about it. But that near-death experience, at least what I felt was a close call, changed my life. Period. Most definitely I emerged from the torrent less inclined to bear the fools and intensely committed to a life lived to the fullest where every minute is so very precious. Well, most of the times I'm able to live accordingly.

Can you tell us a little about your experience as the Artist-in-Residence of Everglades National Park?

That's another book, Madison! It's titled *Chasing Moons in the Everglades*, my collection of poems written during my two weeks alone in the Glades. Two weeks with nothing to do but write! An incredible blessing made more so as it was spent in that unique place on the planet I've come to call my holy land. I spent on average 16 hours a day researching (on the trail and with my library of Everglades books), writing, revising, being. Some day *Chasing Moons* will find a publisher but in the interim, I'll keep on making my annual mecca there, writing about the Everglades to obtain the "sustenance of time/ to place the heart upon" as I wrote in the poem "Refuge."

How does technology relate to the environment, to creative writing?

As I mentioned earlier, the Internet has blossomed with new literary journals, among which are those with an environmental thrust. That's a good thing. And certainly Facebook (which I long resisted) fosters environmental advocacy. Just check out what's happening on FB regarding the anti-fracking movement. And cyberspace gives us instant access to a wealth of information, making research so much easier. I Google "gulf fritillary genus and species" and, voilà! not only do I find out it's *Agraulis vanillae*, but that it's commonly known as the "passion butterfly." There's a kernel to tuck away for a poem.

So, yes, I think technology aides both the environment and creative writing, but I worry about it becoming too intrusive in our lives, which is why I'm grappling with the issue in a new book of poems, *The Gizmo Girl's Diary*, that explore our lives in this Age of Technology. I'll keep you posted!

As a writer, what advice you can give to budding writers? How about as an editor?

Write. No excuses. Write. Then revise, revise, revise, revise, revise. Oh, yeah, and read, read, read. And maybe, but especially when it comes to environmental poetry, take the advice of western writer Michael Engelhard: "We can only find nature's poetry when we perceive our own insignificance."

Thank you.

Again, on behalf of myself and the entire KR staff: thank you!

KARLA LINN MERRIFIELD

Flume Cameo

Ever since you referred to yourself
as flowing like a river,
I have wondered which one:
Are you rio? are you fleuve?
Do you by any chance go by
Amazon? Should I name you
after Nile goddess Isis?
Or aboriginal deity
of Mississippi? Of Ohio?
Please reply to poet who calls you
every river flowing on Earth in time
to the absolute confluence of the soul.

LESLIE ANN

If Poetry Did Not Exist

Nature's vast frame matches the literal and rhetorical,
But does so with impunity and of imperfect virtue free.

The digital dawn breeds surrogate wrongs, and just
To live more freely, we freely fetters free.

Behold television's green glee eye, and our natural
Nature will see, the very thing that hopes but cannot

Speak, the wrecks of words in speeches heard, and
Orators' wars carried through into the polls of glue.

Gazing on... I feel... I know:
Green stalks burst forth dark with the rain. New buds are
Dreaming of the forgotten dead. You hear the soldiers
And wars and Laws — so many foul and loathed Laws
Go to the mirror and pray,
Go to the mirror and bray,
Go to the mirror and say:

If Poetry did not Exist, All would be Permissible.

If Work lies in Hope, Then Hope lies to Work

Work is just what a body thinks when it is at play
All nature works. Slugs and birds and bees
And winter slumbers in the open air,
Wearing on his smiling face a springtime dream.
And only I remain un-busy,
No honey to make, no pair, nothing to build, nothing to sing.

Yet I know the banks well.
Tracing the edge where oil flows.
Bloom, flowers bloom! Glide away rich baron banks...
With colorless lips, and bare brow, I stroll:
And ask you to learn the spells that drowse my soul.
Work without hope draws refineries to the shore,
And hope without littoral shore, is worked erosion, sure.

In Conformity with the Sign

The atomic elements,
 the bodies that
fall into the
void,
the indivisible element (mark, trait, point, letter),
the literal dissemination of
rhetorical belatedness...
is... and always already remains,
the compulsion to restore random
signs to meaning.

All our lives a desperate search for new coincidences between
Word and Thing
Will and Fate.

I stand alone and do my dance
(the only choice I make of chance).

STEPHEN HARTSFIELD

A Good Fish

Toads begin to trill as the last of the evening sun falls from the sky. The occasional gray treefrog offers a tentative song to the early spring, waiting for the time to be right to sing with abandon. Purple martins twitter about, flying around their roosting spots in a last minute flurry of wing and feather. A pileated woodpecker drums against the hollow remnants of a hickory, nature's percussionist pounding out the earth's rhythm. And I stand on the banks of the creek, casting my line.

It has been a while since I fished here. It's a spot not many people know, rich hardwood slopes dropping steeply to the gently rolling creek bottom. The water has become a murky green, a stark contrast to the brilliant blue green of my memory. Of course, the loggers have harvested part of the forest a few miles upstream and the turbid water is surely the result of the broken earth seeking exile in the arms of the sea.

I cast my line in a smooth sideways

arc to avoid the overhanging branches of a river birch, its peeling bark curling in layers of coppertanwhite. A bat cruising down the channel takes a tentative dive for my spinner before careening upward behind the inaudible pulse of his navigation system. The lure drops in just at the cut and I drag it through the water hoping for the satisfaction that a good solid strike brings.

The streams of the Pacific Northwest are far away now. There is no chance of landing a steelhead here in the woodlands of Dixie. Dolly Varden will not be regarding my bait, deciding whether or not to bless my creel with at least one fish. The firs and hemlocks do not tower above and I do not slip through the salmonberry and ferns to drop my line at the base of the canyon wall. There is no hope of the sockeye salmon, the chinook, or the coho rushing up from Prince William Sound to fill my belly.

But there are the trillium, the trout lily, and the redbud standing by

the stream with me. There is the midland water snake curled in the crook of the log, an ectotherm appreciating the sweetness and purity of the earth's changing mood. And there are fish here, too. Crappie and redeye, largemouth bass and bluegill, and even an occasional catfish have hit my spinner at one time or another. So I give a tremendous yank as the strike comes, pulling the fish into the air and yanking the lure from his mouth at the same time. The fish here are smaller than they used to be.

Parula warblers flit through the bottoms zeezeezeezip and my thoughts follow them through the air. I land on the Appalachian River some ten years ago. My friend and I are in a canoe on our way to the Gulf of Mexico. Immense rainfall has flooded the river basin and we meander in and out of the main channel, riding the mighty waters into the floodplain, performing a slalom through the trunks of white oak, black gum, and sycamore. And the canopy is blanketed with

warblers stopping to refuel after their exhausting migration from the forests of Central America. They roll over each other in eddies, tumbling through the plain in search of food and rest. Wave upon wave returning northward to breed zeezeezeezip and I follow them, landing upon the banks of this stream, casting my line.

The lure lands at the point where the fallen hickory dips its crown into the water and I let it drift, cranking the reel slowly, hoping that the rising moon and falling sun intertwine and imbue the silver spoon with a fateful hint of light. When the strike comes I give the slightest snap of my wrist and set the hook. Stepping lightly in the soft mud at the creek's edge I move toward my quarry, holding my rig out over the water to keep from tangling in the shallow snag to my right. It is not a steelhead. It is not a salmon. Instead it is a crappie shimmering silver in the fading light and worthy of the title "a good fish." I smile and begin the trek home.

KATE BOLTON BONNICI

Book of Revelation: A Letter to the Author

Dear John of Patmos, wading seven-sealed
into coded thickets of theological dispute: your vision inspires frenzied
Rapture-love. Yes, you had other enemies in mind. What to do when a
shit-stirring Alexandrian mashes your meaning?

Cats carry toxoplasma gondii. Parasites tickle sleeping human brains,
manipulating personalities. Men, suspicious and rumped. Women, trusting,
ebullient. Our cat has a bronze-splotched iris. The red storm pounds Jupiter, god
of them all.

Perhaps Bishop Athanasius curled up beside his own diseased kitty. Hello,
chirpy pink bow and hidden tongue. Mushy Gnostic love gospels ditched for sea
beasts, horsemen, and a Whore of Babylon.

My child mewd at birth. Dear God, cri du chat. But no, only obligate nose
breathing and infant lung gunk.

Toxo nuzzle my respite-starved neurons, a careless carrier. Will I leave baby on
the curb with the recycling, by perky sprinkler heads and a tan Camry, walk
empty-armed home, head slung back, mouth open like a laugh?

Meanwhile, Jezebel purrs upstairs, slinking against window glass warmed by a
fire-licking star.

Meanwhile, the wind pushes yellow, mold-threaded leaves into gutters. My
father turns on his hospital room TV.

Meanwhile, we spin, high on gravity, orbiting our hearts out.

JOSHUA LAZARUS

darwinboys (an excerpt)

scattering of lincoln logs on blacktop

a sapphire marble
rolls down and away

you do not flinch
at the sound of it reaching apogee

you hear cicadas
and a freeway

it's recess and suddenly
october

a spring rider rocks
on scorched earth

no child can be seen
the birds are gone

on our last day in new york

didn't come by ferry: I hid
in drywall the ferry.
the distinction between sides was concrete without tears.
it scattered our poverty,
then our infinity—

the city, they say, is dark
slowed to the point of darkening.
time in the air around fruit: it drooping,
like any other word, to the touch of your name

we stand now in a pasture of smoke
and watch the trees cannot grow.
sky lark dances for sky lark in the metal shade.
you chase them: pretending,
he smiles— humans courting
at the expense of animal ritual—

their city,
the roots held down
by a loss of old world names

ZACK O'NEILL

NUTRITIONISM

The office was in a giant skyscraper. At the bottom, beneath it really, was a parking structure with no attendant, only machines and cameras. I went up an elevator that played canned music and walked through a hallway decorated with generic pictures of faraway beaches. A woman in a business suit passed me and gave off a plastic smile.

Inside the office, there was a giant semicircular desk that looked like a command center. A woman was there, eyes glued to the computer. Real flowers were on her desk. Post-it notes were everywhere. Behind her, on the wall, was a picture of children where a doctor's diploma might be.

She was pretty, though bulgingly pregnant. Stuck in my ways, I still thought of flirting, an impulse quickly doused by her burst of platonic energy.

"And you are?" she said, looking up with trademark dead-faced curiosity.

"Adam. I'm here to see—"

"You're the 11:30?"

I looked down at my paper. "Yes. The 11:30."

"Dr. Holstein will be right with you. Would you like coffee?"

"Oh, no thank you," I said.

"Good," she said. "It takes 20 tons of water to make one pound of coffee. Did you know that?"

She looked back at her screen. I

noticed an earring at the top of her earlobe, some wrinkles in her shirt. A purple spot on her blouse.

"20 tons?" I said. "Really?"

"Coffee has a horrible water footprint, between the harvesting, processing, and transportation."

"Where'd you hear that?"

"I read it," she said tonelessly. "In a book called *When the Rivers Run Dry*. It takes a ridiculous amount of water for everything. A pound of feedlot beef, for instance, takes 5,000 gallons of water to produce."

"But you shouldn't eat beef."

"You shouldn't drink coffee either."

"That's why I drink red bull."

"Um—"

"See, I don't know anything. That's why I'm here."

I smiled. She didn't.

I turned, looked at the chairs.

"Here for some advice?"

"Yeah," I said, "on my diet."

"Well that's good thinking," she said. "4 of the top 10 causes of death in America are diseases linked to poor diet."

"Oh yeah? What are they?"

She was ready for this question.

"Heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer."

"Impressive."

"Another thing is, and this applies to me obviously, is the Center for Disease Control estimates that due to malnutrition, 1 in 3 American children born after 2000 will develop Type 2 diabetes."

"Wow."

"I worry about my baby."

“Right.”

Feeling like a douche for trying to chat up this girl, I sat down and looked at a fanned-out assortment of magazines that seemed to be for women and old people.

She spoke up again, summoning a retarded sense of hope that must be embedded into my mineral-starved DNA.

“Every year,” she said, “1 in 4 Americans gets a food-borne illness.”

“That’s a lot. What’s that, like 100 million people?”

“And food illnesses cause 52,000 deaths a year in America.”

“Seems like a drop in the bucket,” I said.

She was quiet.

“I heard cardiovascular disease kills like 500,000 people. That’s a poor diet thing, right?”

“Not only that,” she said, “in half of all cardiovascular diseases, the first symptom is death. Every two minutes in this country, someone is walking along, doo-doo-doooo, then thwap! Probably a few have said hello to the grim reaper since the start of this conversation.”

“Right. That’s a little dark, but-”

“You’re right,” she said, “close to 500,000 people a year die in America from cardiovascular disease. Between that and smoking illnesses, 2,000 people die a day. A day!”

“I remember being a waiter in New Orleans,” I said. “People would get the fried seafood combo. Fried cod, fried shrimp, fried oysters, french fries, hushpuppies, then they’d finish the meal and light up a cigarette.”

There was a pause. I heard the lights buzz.

“So,” I said. “You’ve been researching? Or did you learn all of this from the doctor?”

“Both,” she said. “To tell you the truth, nutritionists vary in what they say.”

“I imagine you’ve made learning these things a priority, being pregnant and all.”

“This is a relatively new phenomenon, you know.”

“Well yeah,” I said, “what’s it been, six months?”

“I meant the ramifications of factory foods.”

“Oh, right.”

“It’s definitely an American phenomenon.”

“Mmm.”

“The U.S. spends the most per capita on medicine and the least per capita on food of any first world nation. And hardly any medical doctors have substantial nutritional training. And sometimes their training in medicine isn’t exactly stellar. Over 100,000 people die each year from pharmaceutical drugs prescribed and taken as directed. As directed.”

“Can families file lawsuits over that?”

“Pay the farmer now, or pay the doctor later,” she said. “So goes the wisdom, but

now, you can’t even trust the doctor.”

“Right.”

“You don’t even know,” she said. “There’s more to it than what you see in Food Inc. Like how the resin linings of tin cans contain bisphenol-A, a synthetic estrogen that can leach into

canned tomatoes because tomatoes are acidic.”

“Hmm, I’m not sure what that means, but-”

“BPA is associated with an increased risk of cancer.”

“Oh.”

“And other health problems.”

“Oh.”

“All kinds of factory foods have poisons. The lining of microwave popcorn bags have perfluorooctanoic acid, which may cause infertility in humans.”

“I tried to make my own popcorn once. I set off my smoke detector.”

“It’s one of those things we all eat.”

“I know.”

“Not as much as corn and potato products, though. You probably know all about corn from Food Inc, but some of the most evil foods come from the potato, and that would be true even if potatoes didn’t absorb herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides from the soil then get their vines sprayed with herbicides before harvest and then treated again to prevent sprouting when they’re dug up. And you can’t wash away the chemicals.”

“Does that affect vodka?”

The front door opened. A UPS guy came in with a bunch of boxes. She signed for them, and he left them at the front desk.

“Vitamins?” I said.

She nodded.

Dr. Holstein came out. “Hello there!” he said. “You the 11:30?”

“Yes,” I said. “I’m Adam.”

“I’m finishing up with the 10:30. I’ll be with you soon, Adam.”

“Okay.”

He gave a look to the secretary, who ignored him. This didn’t wipe the smile off his face.

“Factory farms,” she said when he was gone, “produce 1.3 billion tons of sewage a year in the US.”

“Billion? With a B?”

“That’s 5 tons for every person.”

“Jesus, how can that be true?”

“And then there’s what’s in the sewage. Arsenic is in the chicken feces, which gets dumped into soil and drinking water.”

“Why do they feed chickens arsenic?”

“It reduces infection. They also feed them phosphorous because their skeletons can’t handle the rapid growth, all the meat that’s packed onto them as fast as possible. Some of the sewage gets dumped into rivers and streams, and the phosphorous interacts with algae to make chlorophorm, a carcinogen. Literally, food factories are poisoning the waters.”

“I guess we need to all be farmers.”

“Well, if we all farmed, maybe we’d know more about the plight of farm workers.”

“Oh God, another angle.”

“About 1 million children and adolescents live on farms, and half of them work there. Over 100 of them die every year from injuries. And U.S. agricultural workers get close to 20,000 acute pesticide-related illnesses each year. Acute – not mild or moderate, mind you. Acute. That’s a whole other thing. And farmworkers are more likely to develop leukemia, stomach cancer, cervical cancer, and

uterine cancer.”

“God I just came for advice on vitamins.”

“Are you paying out of pocket?”

“No, I just got a new job, and was lucky enough to-”

“You’re lucky you have good coverage,” she said. “Think about people born poor. Food stamps, on average, will get you about \$135 a month, welfare about \$300 – and about 30 million people are on some combination of the two. Tell me, how can you live healthily on that?”

“God it’s all too much.”

There was another pause. Thankfully, before too long the doctor came in, but he didn’t say anything, only smiled and walked briskly to the back.

“You came for advice on vitamins, right?”

“Yeah. Well, what to eat in general. I just need someone to tell me what to eat.”

“Good. He’ll start with the essentials. He’s gonna tell you essential vitamins are A, Bp, B1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, C, D, E, and K.”

“Okay.”

“He’s gonna tell you essential minerals are Potassium, Chlorine, Sodium, Calcium, Phosphorous, Magnesium, Zinc, Iron, Manganese, Copper, Iodine, Selenium, and Molybdenum.”

“I see.”

“He’s gonna tell you essential amino acids are Histidine, Isoleucine, Leucine, Methionine, Phenylalanine, Threonine, Tryptophan, and Valine.”

“Interesting.”

“He’s gonna tell you essential

fatty acids are found in safflower oil, grapeseed oil, poppyseed oil, sunflower oil, hemp oil, corn oil, soybean oil, sesame, olive oil, wheat germ, almonds, chicken fat, and egg yolk.”

“Will this be written down?”

“Then he’s gonna tell you about some basic foods. Like watermelon juice.”

“Watermelon juice?”

“3 servings a day, he’ll say.”

“You’re kidding.”

“Watermelon juice helps quench inflammation that contributes to asthma, atherosclerosis, diabetes, colon cancer, and arthritis.”

“Watermelon juice.”

“You need 6 glasses of vegetable juice a day too, in addition to fruit servings. 14 servings, really, of vegetables a day. And try not to cook them.”

“6 glasses and 14 servings?”

“He’ll also tell you basil, rosemary, oregano, and cayenne are good for parasites and cancer prevention.”

“Oh good, I already eat a lot of those things.”

“You probably eat a lot of manganese.”

“What’s it in?”

“Lots of stuff. The thing about manganese is, if you take more than 10 milligrams it can cause nervous system damage.”

“Wait, wait – that raises a whole other point. Not just knowing what to eat, but how much to eat.”

“Well, he’ll tell you. And he’ll tell you dandelion greens prevent hepatitis and jaundice, dissolve kidney stones, eliminate acne, improve bowel function, prevent anemia, lower your

serum cholesterol by as much as half, eliminate or drastically reduce acid indigestion and gas buildup, prevent or cure various forms of cancer, prevent or control diabetes.”

“Dandelions?”

“But then there’s the more well-known stuff. Pears are good for constipation. Lemons are good for canker sores, corns and calluses.”

“I’m not sure that’s well-known.”

“Apples’ antioxidant compounds help prevent LDL cholesterol from oxidizing, broccoli contains important isothiocyanates, which increase the activity of enzymes that squelch cancer-causing agents. Anybody who has Crohn’s, ulcerative colitis, IBS, multiple sclerosis, or arthritis should avoid beans, because lectins in beans tear up the intestinal lining, causing leaky gut, which leads to autoimmune problems. Brussel Sprouts have compounds that block the activity of sulphotransferase enzymes that can be detrimental to the health and stability of DNA within white blood cells. Tomatoes are the biggest source of dietary lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that, unlike nutrients in most fresh fruits and vegetables, has even greater bioavailability after cooking and processing. Onions are a rich source of fructo-oligosaccharides, which stimulate the growth of healthy bifidobacteria and suppress the growth of potentially harmful bacteria in the colon. Alfalfa sprouts contain beta carotene and isoflavones, naturally occurring antioxidants that protect your body’s cells. Sweet potatoes are high in vitamin B6, which helps reduce the chemical homocysteine in our bodies.

Homocysteine has been linked with degenerative diseases, including the prevention of heart attacks.

Cauliflower contains a compound called glucoraphin, which protects your stomach and intestines from cancer and ulcers.”

“That’s a lot to chew on. Literally.”

“Yeah, but he plays it safe.”

“He does? What’s that mean?”

“Well, here’s some things I read.”

“Okay.”

“Aloe vera...”

“What, the stuff in lotion?”

“...halts the growth of cancer tumors, lowers high cholesterol, repairs ‘sludge blood’ and reverses ‘sticky blood,’ boosts the oxygenation of your blood, eases inflammation and soothes arthritis pain, protects the body from oxalates in coffee and tea, alkalizes the body, nourishes the body with minerals, vitamins, enzymes and glyconutrients, lubricates the digestive tract, reduces triglycerides in diabetics, hydrates the skin, and accelerates skin repair.”

“Yeah and one day they’ll do a study that shows it causes extreme rectal hemorrhaging.”

“I found out so many things. Bee propolis helps with peptic ulcer disease, though experts believe some chemicals in it make asthma worse. Celtic sea salt helps you stay hydrated overnight. Quercetin may help reduce the risk of atherosclerosis. Billberry Extract contains various anthocyanosides, which may fortify blood vessel walls, improve blood flow and maintain good circulation, though side effects include mild digestive distress, skin rashes and drowsiness.

Red clover tea has been used for many years as a remedy for the symptoms of menopause. Nux Vomica improves and reverses memory impairments in test animals and may inhibit amnesia.”

The doctor came out with a patient, a young man like me, who seemed to be in a daze. He had a bunch of paper and a bag in his hand. This guy didn't say goodbye to anyone, or even acknowledge us, just walked out the door.

The doctor stood there, staring at me, smiling a little. “You look stressed,” he said.

“I might be.”

“50-80% of all human disease is attributable to stress. Did you know that?”

“Oh yeah?”

“I'll be back out in a second.”

I heard the buzzing of the lights again and saw my nemesis lurking.

“We can talk about stress when you get back out, if you want,” the secretary said. “Tai Chi, acupuncture, yoga, meditation. If we have a chance, we'll talk about dairy too. That's a whole other thing. Don't ask him about that – he probably won't bring it up, and doesn't want you to.”

“Okay.”

“Oh, and don't forget to remind me to tell you about air filters and germ prevention.”

I looked at her and smiled. Her eyes, of course, were on the computer. I looked at the screen and saw she was shopping for shoes.

you learn about this stuff”

She popped open a Microsoft Word document. A few seconds later, a printer near the doctor's door started whirring. A sheet came out.

She looked at me and was quiet.

I went over to the printer and took the sheet:

A River of Waste – The Hazardous Truth About Factory Farms (2009)

all4naturalhealth.com

“Arsenic in Our Chicken” by Nicholas Kristof, NY Times (2012)

care2.com

cdc.gov

“Cheap Food: Workers Pay the Price” by Arturo Rodriguez, Alexa Delwiche and Sheheryar Kaoosji (2009)

“Farmer in Chief” – Michael Pollan (2008)

Food Inc. (2008)

healthdiaries.com

Ingredients (2009)

leaf lady.org

livestrong.com

naturalnews.com

prostate.net

sciencedaily.com

Smithsonian Institute

Supercharge Your Immune System (2003)

umm.edu

vegetarian-nutrition.info

“Alphabetized!”

“Just out of curiosity,” I said, “where'd

PEGGY AYLSWORTH

Not Merely Now, Voyager

The Moon, always the same
lantern, steady in her flux,
the one who keeps an eye
on my broad night, absorbs
in her craters the odes, the fugues,
every masters' stroke. The Queen
of hoarders, cloaked in light,
cares nothing for this man's hat,
discarded, that girl's Prada.
What did Dante harbor up his sleeve?
Haunted by the Moon never
on vacation, his pointed shoes
obsessed his feet in one direction.
The Moon remains relentless
in her phases – not this year's
bustle, next year's hobbled skirt.
And what of that man driving
his old Cadillac? He could be lonely.
“We have the moon,” she said.

THOMAS COCHRAN

Eagles

I hiked the sodden lane then set up
to observe from the pavilion, bracing
my elbows on the splintery rail
and panning with field glasses
the laced tops of high trees on the bank
opposite, where they were said to roost.
I knew nothing of them except pictures,
and when two appeared in the circle
as if cued I was startled
by the whiteness of their heads.
They shadowed each other
in a series of intricate stunts before settling
on a pair of deadwood spikes
in the water no more than fifty yards
from where I sat, soaring.
The edges of their brown body feathers
were haloed, their beaks and legs
as yellow as a child's raingear.
Deeply serious they fished with eyes
that like my own never blinked—
I was determined not to give up
looking at them for even that long.
Some time later they lifted themselves
back into their realm and were away,
speaking in their dry hinge voices
while I glassed them out of sight wondering
if perhaps they had not been fishing at all,
only pausing a moment for my benefit.

MORGAN HARLOW

At Hearing the News of a 25% Reduction in Polar Ice

I suddenly see them, at the water line around the edge of the bucket,
silver in the sunlight,
a vision of the tadpoles we had gathered from the creek
now thirty or more years behind us, linking our past
to this present where we are left with
the thought of them dead, vanished,
off the planet, traveling in the ionosphere,
not looking for bread crumbs as we had believed
wanting only to breathe.

BRENT HOUSE

Augur of Mouldboard

& hilum buried lifts tufts as ground cleaves under sharp
edges & the toft widens to blissfully
 beatifically hollow ways offer body
to ground & my mother always said that mean people
 live forever so I wonder
 if she was meanness personified
to prolong her life & I wonder if she wishes she would
 have been nicer to her daughter
 if she had know her daughter would wash
her body & a lifetime estate carries little comfort when
 the body erodes quicker & weeds bud
 absent cuts of mouldboard
 breaking up & warming of soil black heat more
 quickly & more deeply offer good first years
 & the deeply buried rise
hybrid & heirloom first seeds so cherished so carnally
 tended bowed before
 salt of sweat & first offering
of water & the dominion of soil extends more deeply
 than flesh from seed
 to radicle coat hypocotyl cotyledon plumule
to hope first among all leaves the venate bed made
 whole lobed with branched tendril.

MICHAEL FRAZER CLAY LEAVES

In first grade or so we spent our recesses devoted to creation. It was childish, simplistic. Creation nonetheless. But it wasn't allowed because mud stains. What the teachers didn't understand was that creating is a dirty process. Our hands and clothes would be spotted with mud. Which is why they didn't permit it. It didn't stop us to be punished or chastised. We knew there was something in our play. Something they couldn't understand.

By a chain link fence that separated the schoolyard from a ditch was a line of green plants bordered at their bases by mud. Our hands would run through the slickness. We'd dig deep into it, throw it on the ground, step on it. Handfuls of it. It was cold and smooth to the touch. We'd form piles of it, splatter it, cover our hands in it. Careful not to get it on our clothes. Well, as careful as elementary school children could be.

One of our fascinations was planting gobs of the moldable matter onto the plant leaves, covering the green with cold earth. Taking a piece of the muck and gently planting it on each leaf, enough to stick.

We'd come back a day later to find the mud still attached to the leaves, pulling the small branches of the bushes down toward the ground with their weight. First, we'd break the covered leaves off at the stem, allowing the branches to snap up, free from their previous burden. Then we'd slowly peel the moulded clay from the leaves. Every vein, every deviation of the stem, holes in the leaves were replicated in the newly hardened mud. For every leaf, there was now a twin, a mirror image of the original. We admired what we made because it was ours. Because we had created *something*. Because it transgressed *their* rules.



But we didn't let the leaves last for long. They were ours to make. They were also ours to destroy. As the clay was now more solid than it was the day before, we could break the mimic leaves into pieces. They were hardened into fragile triangles, no longer shapeable. They had to be broken. We'd tear them apart almost as easily as the originals. We would throw them over the fence into the ditch or dip them in the gutter water to watch them dissolve and fall apart. The fragments couldn't be put back together, and there was fun in our ability to destroy. They couldn't survive. Not a single remain.

The moment we ran out of clay leaves, the process began again. After destroying all of them, every last bit, we'd make more. Again. Our hands would be caked in the brown mud another time. It would harden under our fingernails, cake the rims of our cuticles, make our hands grey like the

leaves we had created. Every crease in the skin appeared to be like broken clay itself, as if we ourselves were falling apart, as if we might be washed away with water like the mud we'd used.

As recess ended, we were called back to our classes. We'd rush to the bathrooms, to the large white basin with three faucets to wash our hands. There was nothing we could do to go against our teacher's rules. Despite the amusement in our rebellion, we still had to obey. We had to wash away the proof or face the consequences. We had to rid ourselves of every last bit of evidence of our forbidden play. The cold water ran over our hands, rinsing the muck off. A grayish brown swirl circled the drain as we continued washing, the pool becoming clearer and clearer, as the grit was washed away with the last remains of our short-lived creations.

EMAN HASSAN

Even Light Pollution

As I talk to birds
from my human ledge

they cock their heads;
assess my peculiar stance.

Something stinks. Something veers
off kilter. As for ants, every which way

gone haywire. As for dragonflies
drowning in chlorinated water.

But it's bees over the pool that give
me worry, their drone, the

way they eat rust patches
off metal poles:

nature takes on
newer nature.

I tilt my head for a birds-eye
view:

even these bees without stingers,
bezerk as they hover

beneath white-bellied airplanes
with blade-metal gills, even

fluorescent rings around
a harvest moon swung low

over the sea, even beady helicopter
eyes belonging on flies

dot the wide blue instead
of seagulls, now.

To the Beach With My Nephew

Kuwait

It's the way we held a sandwich in each hand:
we relished the ride. I recall light blue
skies, turn a back on soot-heavy black

spewing from the Ahmadi Oil Refinery we drive by;
uncapped flares smoking like dirty dinars lighting the desert on fire for more.

The refinery resembles New York City at night to those who know and dream
of being somewhere else, maybe over there
though we savor the cheap falafels over here.

Once we reach the shore I tell Little Ant how clean the deep used to be.

Now barnacles form
on Styrofoam,

wind hurls the white-tipped whorls forward

like a heartbeat,
like a refinery
that never sleeps.

I want to say *enough*, oh sea like in that B&W Kuwaiti movie, but the waves keep coming.

Two hermit crabs locked in battle:
it's in the way their claws grip together.

My sister meant well, jumped to interfere,
save the smaller from becoming
the larger one's meal

but the waves keep coming and we are in Manhattan
looking out a window over the Hudson.

KENNETH VANDERBEEK *SENSELESS MAN*

He of keen empathy and understanding, of intrinsic feeling and observation; he of the profuse senses which received and processed the world as the most beautiful flower the light of the sun; he was becoming a senseless man. The progression was tangible. The whole of him had commenced descending in cosmic disorder. He was shriveling to a facsimile. The gravity of his fall was such that the organs were literally fragmenting with the mind, especially those of the senses: the nose receding to a nub, the ears already drooping like wilted petals, the eyeballs tearing to jelly smears, the thin smug mouth sealing up as a zippered purse. His plight was not the eventuality of age or disease but of era and disorder. In every previous epoch his faculties would have declined in concert with the declining body, the senses, too, in natural course. Then, before sight had commonly exhibited as an hallucination, before hearing had been barraged and blunted, he would have felt an effortless equilibrium in the world and a boundless pleasure in communing with it, and would have shunned death as a sad end: then, when dirt and fauna had comprised the greater ground, and the air had smelled clean, and the days had convened in clarity: the boundless starry lights of waters amply recalled by cloudless nights, and the world's prevailing stimuli had been the stimuli of life. When butterflies and bees had still flourished.... Yet the world had so changed that the senseless man no longer even thought

to consult a doctor. And why? Few, if even the most exceptional specialists among them, would have had the first idea of what ailed him, nor been able to diagnose it properly if they had. True, psychiatrists and sociologists might have been able to assist; yet those others whose only degrees were physiological would neither have been able to surmise his dysfunction nor a cure. (And what cure? What cure is there for a parasite that exists at the top of its food chain?) Rather, in his ears, nose and mouth they would have detected only the usual minutia; in his hands but the feeble grip of infirmity; and in his eyes would have missed entirely the dread view of now....

The senseless man crawled into the world at the end of the last millennium, as mankind's innocence was passing to adolescence. His parents reared him in a house commonly called a ranch (which propagated as its dwellers: exponentially). In his youth he played board games and puzzles, hotbox and hoops, more time though reading books or loitering in a languishing wilderness while fingers raked peanut-butter jars; deer-slayer of his bookish imagination: piercing the shadows like the sun's dusty searchlight, cattails slapping him from his back pockets; the jars soon to be full again, with pollywogs. When exhaustion would finally surrender to the simmering heat he'd slow to a skip, as a sprite over gorse, and flop into a hammock of honeysuckle, where he'd sun for a spell sucking long stems: the world fragrant, prepossessing,

its timbre the tepid breeze through the grass: the sonority of life. He had not at all sensed the world's changing then because, like deceit, it would have seemed as contrary to its nature as his own, and also because he had not yet bloomed to such a perception: his heart as yet possessed only of the foibles of his peers for whom life was as philosophic as routine, the earth nothing more than play ground. And so, too, had he not yet discovered ugliness, though such awareness would spawn with the pouring of the neighborhood's first sidewalks and curbs, because they were intrusive: because they were superfluous to the lean gravel lane he'd felt had had no need of improvement: because their only seeming function was to attract an unwanted commerce of people and machines — because he could not fathom what benefit these "improvements" had over ground. And then more cement, each with a geometry and symmetry as precise as the others: his nascent struggle with modularization. Immediately following the bell of recess, and on the weekends, and whenever else he could, he gave increasing shares of his time to the languishing wilderness, even carting his homework there (and his mother's cutting board for a writing platform). As aborigines had marked emergence with twigs, he had marked with all his senses. He had never lost his way, for he understood that as trees thin and shorten in their line, the clearing is near. The aborigines would have liked him, and he would have liked them, and though the prospect of longevity would not have been nearly as good back then, it had happened that with his first

thoughts of displacement he had come upon the realization that, were it possible, he would welcome then... and the shorter life. Meanwhile, not a year before the wilderness had finally succumbed, the gorse and the pollywog pond having been the first of it razed, had his ignorance briefly prevailed but only for the intervention of the parents, who had moved him to another place before he could have witnessed the devastation.

One day, as the senseless man waited for a bus, the resonant early-morning hiss he abruptly realized (of some fathomable source) was not that of a near breeze or gathering storm, but of the morning's rant of motorized machines. He was thirty-five then and naturally felt stupid. During the return trip, passing again the mammoth rock facings of the sunken highway, he suddenly realized that these, too, were not of the world's making, but man's. —Were these reckonings intuitive? In his stupor he found himself transported to two pertinent days of his youth, the first during which, as he had waited for the school bus, a comparable hissing had forged the early morn yet had moved him naught: a mere feature of the changing seasons, he'd thought; the other, which could have happened during any one of the family's annual summer trips to the coast, when he had presumed the grading at the thruway's entrances and exits to be the work of the glaciers probably: as they had rolled out the valleys. Naturally, in keeping with his susceptibility to emotional interpretations, more acute recognitions ensued such that ultimately he was no longer able to be anywhere out that it did not all of it seem tainted and false:

that the whole world looked — ugly; every sound cacophony; every smell foul; every taste bitter. By then he was not awake that his heart was not pounding and a constant sweat exacerbating it. Feverishly he framed his homestead to preserve his fading memory of the “lost” world, deeming his tiny parcel the final frontier. From there he shunned everything beyond as unnatural and that which remained inside as condemnable — beginning with the air-conditioning box and proceeding to the oven and the refrigerator and all the appliances and the latticework of basement pipes and even the toilet, all of which he promptly destroyed, henceforth to accept only that which the world provided: the earth to satisfy his hunger, the sky his thirst. His whole property, too, of course, he willed to nature; that is, except for a broad garden of his own making, the rest to grasses and weeds and bushes and trees as they would come by each other and the birds and the wind; the sidewalk and curb, as well the walkway, driveway and door steps, he axed to bits, and similarly the chain-link fence and garage (including the car) — all else to flourish or decline in its own way. And at such times as he must venture beyond, he did so only by walking: abiding utmost caution to avoid everything in his progress that was not the earth: sidewalks and curbs, roads and streets, medians, gutters, driveways, alleys, bridges, viaducts, parking lots, . . . and when such hindrances were unavoidable, set before himself a path of branches and twigs, leaves and bark, mosses, ferns, grasses, nuts, rocks, stones, especially handfuls of

dirt or mud: everything and anything the earth provided and which could sanctify his journey out and back; such goings and comings being very rare, of course: made only of absolute need, as when he had to replenish his coffer of candles; otherwise he lived in isolation, one day to the next as it proceeded by the sun; tending to life as the birds and the beasts: instinctively. With one difference. For in forsaking his kind the senseless man also forsook intercourse, social and sexual: dismissing every kind of contact — estranging himself from everyone he knew and had ever known or could know: never to wed or reproduce — ecstatic that when he would die, so, too (mercifully), would his seed. And thus would be his legacy: having denied the whole overpopulated race of any further nuisances in his name. (Unlike others among the senseless — how many none is yet probably certain — this senseless one would not kill himself; for how absurd would such a death be in its contraposition of his and the world’s nature, which both he so ardently defended, albeit decrepit as his was!)

Far be it that substantial numbers of his kind shook or shuddered from his senselessness; on the contrary, among the billions he was hardly a blip; he languished in his resigned understanding in virtual anonymity: albeit grateful; glad that he was as nil as his burden: indifferent to the few that had ever known or noticed him who laughed him off as aloof. With onset of the hallucinations — first signal that he was no longer capable of existing in the world as it was — he had, for a time,

determinedly summoned the inner child that it might accommodate the world (the child's diminutive view). Naturally, then, had he welcomed his indisposition simply as a passage: the first door to middle-age; and having prayed for its enhancement had become a more accomplished observer: suddenly, as never before, focusing on gazes, that in them might detect something of the success or failure of their bearers' own inadaptability. In fact he'd given so much to this inquiry that it would not be exaggeration to have described him then as fixated; and as a consequence, not surprisingly, had he been accused en masse as a ninny: such that quickly had become the target of gossip (and his house of tomatoes) — and, as he had still ridden the bus then, had been subjected constantly to epithets including “F—khead!”, “Fagot!” and “Flybreath!”, and eventually cast out (always, of course, well before his stop). Yet despite this had he also taken to eavesdropping, that in any utterance he might have discovered the truth in the mutterer's heart (including any slightest acknowledgment that he might consider him not really to be aloof at all): indeed, in sum, that he, the mutterer, was succumbing, too (or already had) to senselessness. And so, to this end, had he efforted to dissect temperaments in snarled parking lots and thoroughfares and taken aimless taxi rides just so that he could witness firsthand. He had idled before For Sale signs on lawns recently halved by widened lanes just so he might glimpse the owners' despair. He had pursued pedestrians on packed sidewalks just so he might

feel viscerally their anxiety. And, until he had cancelled his subscriptions and junked the TV, had continually scoured the media in kind for any indication of unity in dread. Of course, no such confirmation ever occurred and his investigation had abruptly ended, and it was precisely then that he had vanquished the new world for the only remnant of the old: his homestead — from which he had immediately commenced a new kind of observation: of the house beyond his bedroom window: not of its shortcomings, certainly, but rather, of the person who resided therein.... For with much luck, he hoped, he would ascertain that the old oaf felt as displaced as he; and for a time it seemed that the odds were in his favor, for his property, too, the oaf had given over to the elements (in his case, to its original prairie state); nor did he, except of absolute necessity, venture beyond his own lot; nor keep a single motorized machine; and, except during the recent census-taking, had never a visitor, either. From the blanched water-pocked sill above his bed, hot as a sauna plank, the senseless man would commence his investigation with a perusal of the oaf's own little nature preserve (always consoling, despite that its overgrowth was of neglect), then make the visual leap from the sill in, there to observe him in his own reclusion. These dalliances having been, as they were, initiated of a new sense — of urgency, he proceeded to enforce them with a regularity befitting a perpetual mood: each day perched at his sill, elbows fused to it, moist knuckles like gnarled wings bearing his chin, this usually in the late afternoons when the both

of them were aching for a second wind: his timeless stare mining the oaf's every movement for a signal of his own self-banishment and despair. Yet after some time having resolved that he could not know, at least not with certainty, what was the condition of the other's heart, that is, without making a direct inquiry, he ceased the examination, and rather turned his attention back to his own homestead, now to the little fertile ground outside his door, where, before his imposed sequestration, had lain concrete steps, there to saunter and languish anew: his rogue eyes staring at reality, his hairline mouth zipped into its purse, his whole the refreshed image of doom. Inevitably then the neighbors at the other side, the ones with the hedges, perched — they who had never met the senseless man but disliked him nonetheless — perched in their bramble hurling insults and epithets and tomatoes and threatening that if the senseless man (whom they called dude) did not do something pronto about his goddamned eyesore of a yard, they would call the health department; to which the senseless man never flinched, of course: the rants he never heard: his hearing being, by then, half of what it was. — Yet the table was set such that these neighbors and vigilant others had commenced their own scrutiny of the senseless man: young and old; rich and poor; liberal and conservative; black, white, yellow, red — no social, economic or political strata being without representation — all partaking in common appraisal of him, whom they concluded, in addition to his being a ninny, was hypersensitive. Those

especially in proximity who had to suffer his howling at all hours had come to the realization that he would be better off living on a deserted island, or, even more accurately, to have lived in a previous century. Some, naturally, began to seek him out for an audience, wading and scratching through the brush for his windows in the expectation he'd receive them; only, of course, finally to be rejected; though he might appear, mouth gaping, eyes fiery before their ignorance — never to utter so much as a chirp, lest they might think he deserved them. Nor was it long before this lot, having initially been fragmented, formalized: tents, tables, benches, grills, boom-boxes trucked in with eminent purpose and pitched with all variety of finger foods and bottled condiments and bottled waters and bottled flavored waters — all at reasonable prices, compliments of the sponsors; and sidewalk-painting and hide-and-seek and treasure-hunts and tugs-of-war and tree-climbing and pie-eating contests; and, for a mere thirty dollars apiece, donkey rides for the kids and apple tosses for the adults: T-shirts being presented to the latter whose fruit could notch any part of the ninny's house through the awful jungle. All proceeds going for community development.

Never mind that someone finally squealed and the authorities poured in to inform the senseless man that his property was unbecoming and must therefore be corrected immediately to avoid condemnation, the world having its rules, after all: in this case in accordance with aesthetics and zoning — and he actually acted on the summons (seething), if only that it

would preclude further intrusion. He started by clipping back the thistle and ragweed that usurped his perimeter like a prickly beard, their seeds having been brought there by the wind or varmints, it was not important which: snip-snip with scissors (being, as he was, no longer in possession of “gardening tools”) — only, of course, to abruptly cease in horror of this action, of its contrivance, and hurl the instrument of destruction at the beyond; such measured aggression ensuring that he would never again lift so much as a fingernail against the earth, except in consummate appreciation, while to the same degree proving what a fool he had been to squander his privacy to the public — and by extension necessarily also raising a critical reminder: that the principal reason he’d forfeited the world of man (after his desperation to escape its ugliness and perpetual noise) was that he wished never again for sustained human contact. —And damn rules to hell, he would constantly mutter (as another would mutter prayer), particularly those that deem to enforce aesthetic “standards” — infringements! they are: just more of the already countless affronts that are advancing the earth’s ruin (too many people, of course, being the worst)! And so, like the territorial raccoons that made a most marvelous mess of his mulch, he censured the ignoramuses to cease and desist and leave him be; and to be certain they understood his seriousness, as soon as he believed his defiance had sufficiently injured them, he hibernated. —Now for quite some time he was incognito, appearing only, and cryptically, to gather for

sup what the little land proffered, especially his favorites: sweet gum bark and mushrooms. And what’s more he thrived nocturnally, which the ebbing curious knew by the starry ivy-covered windows that stoked the dark like a dying candelabra. Meanwhile the world out, world of the eons and his fathers, thrived, too, in its sumptuous fury: his lot’s fauna advancing freely from unfettered seed and spore: thistle, wildflower and wild raspberry usurping spaces; vines snarling telephone wires, the grass going to seed, fledgling trees cropping up like flags on a strategy board: all this resplendent life-without-plan giving to the unfenced ground a gorgeous boundlessness. Even his door had lately sprouted, as an espalier, though more so in public notices, which, of course, he buried in the mulch pile, and which the city, of its own, and more aptly directed, proclivity toward growth, in time forgot. Oddly, then, the senseless man began to feel somewhat constrained by his self-exile. To mitigate this frustration he reacquainted himself with his library’s nature books, beginning with the nineteenth century landscape painters. Absorbed by these, his hallucinations actually receded for some time: noises muffled somewhat; his eyesight clarified a little; the air smelled abruptly and eminently earthly; he almost tasted life again. After all, it was he who had projected the terrible problem of his species to its very source; and in this felt a messianic empowerment. And then one day it finally occurred to him that humans exist as two types: those in which nature thrives and those in which it has been bred out. And,

somewhat invigorated by this analysis, for the first time in weeks he ventured back out.

Yet what a blunder! What idiocy! As if spoiled milk can be merely willed back to purity! Within a moment of exposure he had stormed back in, and in a fury had proceeded to seal over every crevice in the house, pardoning no opening, no merest crack, that could yield the chaos of out; and in quick succession double-, nay, quadruple-soundproofed his sanctuary with scrap metal, plywood boards, trusses, beams, posts, flashing, which he had kept, for just such a finality, from the torn-down fence and garage; and when those had been exhausted, every other kind of suitable material he could muster: cookie sheets, mirrors, countertops, tabletops, the washing machine lid; newspapers, magazines, cardboard; his cutting board and ironing board; stacked furniture and stacked books (the latter from his thirty-three bookshelves), and, of course, the bookshelves, too. And so the senseless man had exacerbated his holdout against the new world; and for the next several years reaped its benefits in consummate seclusion within his proper, all but airtight, miniature of the old.

Yet as time in human perception seems often to accelerate, these years of aloofness proved finite, of course: the principal evidence of this being, despite their isolation, his senses' relentless decline. And despite its intrinsic amenities, his Eden could not derail their dissolution. For still he had only to squint, that even of the vagueness of wakening could easily

decipher the wasteland; had only to idle, that despite his near deafness and interminable handiwork among the windows and walls could nevertheless still detect the irrepressible racket as if he were propped inside its core; had only to sneeze to taste the bitterness of inevitability. Naturally, of such acute sensitivity (the senseless man's blessing and curse) had he rather quickly evolved from a curiosity to a has-been, the once intrigued having shown less and less interest in tandem with his public cynicism, but rather directing their attention again to their better pursuits of productivity and procreation. Naturally incensed, and at the same time also ruefully cognizant of his flickering sense of honor, in response the senseless man begged his will for a rekindling of vengeance such that next he might take up the pen as sword, that his message would finally universalize. Yet now in place of strength was pain; in hope, resignation. He had been reared to believe that a solitary voice can effect change; yet of his singular rationality had come to realize he was voiceless. At the same time, he began to wonder whether such as his sensory decline was not the consequence, rather, of some flaw in himself. He rushed to a closet and retrieved a fan and when he had (wincing) plugged it in cried out, "I!", "I!", over and over crying, "I!", "I!"...that the fan's little manmade wind would carry him away, away, away. So the ensuing stillness was all the more devastating. Suddenly he longed for the presence of a person, an intermediary, albeit realizing that should one materialize, she might, quite possibly, make a case against his displacement: his exile.

Meanwhile, as should be no surprise to anyone, the motor machines out: at front and back, left and right, at a stone's throw and farther, north, south, east and west and at all points around and in between, in their ceaseless parade racked his mind like Chinese water torture. He hated himself as a hypocrite for having turned on the artificial wind, yet had had to for its hum of preservation, so afraid that his heart would burst without it.

One night, as he lay beside the hum, a pinpoint of light that had somehow infiltrated his window's plywood board stung his eyeballs. He blinked through to behold, in the nebulous facing window, that veritable duplicate of his own pallid fleshiness. The oaf's mouth was moving like a fish's. What was it uttering, an invitation: "Dinner...dinner"? The senseless man pressed an ear to the board (as others once had to the ground to hear the living prairie). "Die...die!" burned the words instead, and babbling on, "for of your making are you no longer somebody, but nobody, and therefore condemned to cease, to be — no more!" And that was the extent of the oaf's soliloquy, and the last of it the senseless man would have heard anyway, for his breathing stopped.

Vanquished relatives and friends, and looters, upon hearing of the senseless man's passing, descended upon his house to clean it out, but were turned away, of course, on account of there being no will; and as long as the house sat in probate it would continue to decline such that it would eventually have to be boarded up on the outside almost as much as

it had in. It was not long that a flock of ravens had discovered the corpse and by their signals summoned all the other creatures of the neighborhood: the raccoons, foremost, but also the rabbits and the squirrels and the moles and the lone fox, as well the dogs and the cats, and all nibbled their way in and feasted on him in turn, as had been his intention, until the couple with the hedges, so incensed by the odor, had called the cops. And so it was, that as soon as what remained of him had been properly disposed and all concerned had sufficiently washed their hands of him, had the ground, ground of ages, ground of aborigines and forebears, ground of eternal flux, this ground he had so loved and reluctantly called property, finally settled into its proper state: of condemnation.... In time, having sniffed long enough to dismiss any near-term probability of further intrusion from mankind, the entire raccoon family one day pitched its nest; and in quick succession then the branches of the trees bent again with the weight of nests; and the old mushroom patch resounded with the croaking of toads; and the whole of the little preserve swayed in the now constant motion of feet in twos, fours, sixes, and eights. And the senseless man, who had been deceased for all of a month, was daily besieged with complaints of unsightliness and excessive noise.

The End

DIANE RAPTOSH

Poems vi – x

*from Torchie's Book of Days, a
book-length dramatic monologue in
progress*

VI

Inwit. In it:
wisdom's fist
knitted in
with conscience's

in scape—mind's
ecosystem, in-lit
like the Great Barrier
Reef. Like sloth fur.

When we've got
enough of it within
perhaps we'll reach
that state of yog

with the Supreme
how Cathy said
of Heathcliff
You are always

in my mind,
as my own being. Readership—
my mister, my missus, my inmost:
sometimes a single word

provides the means
to abide. Provided
you've a job . Roof patched
back to its prime. Some fruit

and grain. Small cache

of meat. By you
I mean we.
By *mind—body.*

VII

I love signing Torchie on screens at
the bank
with only my index fingernail cliff.
About the effect

of membership in the tribe
of people with single names,

I like it with love's detestation
of most scripted things. Love is

a protein, I state to my selves—so
doing, grow meatier,
showy as rosemary and garlic

roast leg of lamb on a spit.
If you don't believe us ask Virgil or
Pink.

Ovid or 2pac. Pythagoras.
Weegee. There's such a thing

as The Guild of One-Name Studies
Centre of Excellence, renowned

for silken members' rooms.
Do you believe in love? Madonna
roars before she sings Vogue. As luck

has it, I happen to
have before me How to Read
Wittgenstein,

written by someone named Monk.
How do you

make love last? I ask him, halfway
through

the chapter “Picturing the World,”
to which he rolls out:

Play-acting—
Singing catches—

Making a joke; telling it—
Solving a problem in simple
arithmetic—

Translating from one language into
another—
Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting,
praying.

Shy men, this Monk, his Ludwig.
Pure nonesuches! Still, keen

reader-lambs, I could really handle an
assist from you:

I want to learn to love things as they
are

with the rapid startled unknowing
of a floating dock washed up

on some far shore post-tsunami—
vertigo-edged and dangling
with only the most unheard of

stripe of worm. Did you hear the one
about how Geronimo jumps from a
plane and shouts, “Meeeeeee!”?

Does Plato count as having lived
mononymously? Scheherazade, yes.

Does Lassie? Do porn stars count? Is
it plain
odious that I love

the way mule deer move
their ears almost constantly as much

as I love anyone on earth?
If it is don't tell me. If it isn't too.

VIII

Put another way, I'm a perceptions
worker.

After forty-some years
of living on Earth, I prefer now simply
to riff on it. A small sea

moves off the breeze, a thousand
crude leaf rafts trekking aloft. . . . Ah,
thirst
for air does look like verse—
the sounds of each word

breathing clear of its meaning. This
thought
makes reason stare: the timbre of, e.g.,
aubergine practically fracks you
with feminine niff. What's more, I'm
embarrassed

to say bruschetta out loud, so I
couldn't make it
to Lizbeth's cocktail party last week.
Do you pronounce
the crackling in the middle
of that piece of bread or say it sh?
Absurdity

is a luxury sure as money

causes dearth, and I am still here like
some
hexy refrain with a mind to feed
people
what they can feel. When did you last

fix your lips in a buss solely
to whistle? Can near air weather your
joy
like planks of skinned wizards? To
really live
there should be dread too. . . . I shall
try,

under sun's gaze and in lesser fire,
to arrive at being more amply with
others,
as though from underneath. Elm root.
Sea frond.

Marine annelid complex as we are—in
no one in particular

did I find the best creeds to take after.
Years back
I'd been noodling on
a klatch of breathy cows in a swath
of red pumpkins, when my grown face
got suddenly stuck like this—

IX

I fall slightly in love with whoever I
get to
stand next to—and all you
I address. And then there's this:
I'm having an affair with truth.

This sheathes me
in apenglow. Razor burn.
Should I choose a woman or man
for the lifelong? Regardless of status

everyone's secretly married
to somebody else,
to patterns of small things'
reticent densities: packs of filter-free
cigarettes,

those tiny yellow submarines
of jellyfish grubs,
the means by which spider blood
fluoresces
under UV lights. I contain
pulchritude,

yes. Perhaps I am too much
my mother and father—
more niche than genre;
half torch, in quarter parts swan song

and restlessness; more
a female Bill Maher, less Lois Lane at
day's end,
more poncho than program. All
marriages
should be based on two-year contracts

like most of these tiny thumb pianos
we use to text our friends:

I've been spending my evenings
with Walterbot. Sipping two
MaryAnns....

X

We have the same number of hairs on
our skin
as chimpanzees, just that
ours
have grown useless. This helps us

to sweat more easily, make life harder
for ticks—our forebears clearly

semi-aquatic, dipping finned toes in
the swimming pool of the self in its
maiden phase. There's such a thing

as the Thetys vagina salp
which

locomotes by

pumping raw sea through
gelatinous body. The yellow-orange-faced

Columbian katydid sports ears like an old person's,
only it stows them inside the crooks
of their knees. Dung beetle. First ever creature

to cram the light of the Milky Way
to chart its own path. The atoms

that make up who we think ourselves to be:
mostly empty space.

Ah,

cigarette— singlehanded

strong emotions surrogate!

I'm pretty sure
such busyness lays the base for laziness,

wee gob of phlegm,
in every apothegm.

Does my brain look fat?

LUISA VILLANI

Pictures of the Floating World

— for Julia Butterfly Hill

Ukiyoe I remember to pronounce
by saying, you keep your “a”--
half-a-blessing a girlfriend offered me
in high school, the other half being:

out of trouble. My vulgarities keep me
intact, and ukiyoe is a vulgarity,
a form of painting shunned
by an Asian high court

because it depicted nothing
important--trees
mostly, and land, grass, water--things
considered background, landscape.
Imagine then, in the foreground,

the one, who looking up,
saw not the carbon-paper night sky
with its much poked periods of stars
letting in, peephole after peephole

the bone-white light, like death,
behind all things. No. Instead, she saw
the occluding jigsaw of leaf shadows,
the living puzzle, and she said, No

this maze shall not die,
not here, not now. She hugged the
hirsute
giant, named her “Luna,” then climbed
away from the sensible ground,

like Cosimo, the much bemused
Baron
in an Italo Calvino novel,
who floated above his world,
until he made peace with all things

terrestrial. Julia had no such long-
term plans, no eye on her own
eternity, just on the eternity of a tree,
which she lived in,

for 738 days. Two years
of sleeping like a bent finger,
of the wind pouring by like destiny
twisting every possibility

and every possible branch.
Can I say I’ve gone as far
in that same period of time,
as the woman who sat still

and let trouble find her?

PATTY SOMLO

A MATTER OF TIME

Carla heard the stairs creak as she sketched a circle with her fingertips in the damp center of the window glass. Ted had been down in the basement all morning, staring at the screen on his laptop. He'd been silently stewing, ever since Carla had berated him for not having a plan. Carla wished Ted would join her at the window so they could make up. She needed Ted to reassure her everything was going to be all right.

The creaking grew louder. Carla could tell Ted had reached the top.

"We're going to have to use the boat," Ted said before Carla had a chance to turn around.

Water from rain dropping by the bucketload the past month had mixed with the parking strip mud, creating a black pool next to the tea-colored lake the street had become.

"The boat?"

Ted was dressed in knee-length, olive green rubber waders and a black raincoat, with the hood pulled up.

"A kayak, actually," Ted explained. "I bought it yesterday. Figured we'd be needing it to get out."

"Get out?"

Ted placed his hands on Carla's shoulders one at a time.

"Towns along the coast are under water."

Ted let out a long sigh.

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying that I've gotten us a boat. We're going to have to paddle our way out."

Carla wheeled around, her vision blurred from the tears threatening to spill down her cheeks. This had to be a dream. She was going to wake up and walk in the street, not swim, and look in both directions for cars. The rain would stop and sun, the blessed sun, was surely going to back come out.

Through her tears, Carla couldn't help but see water spilling over onto the sidewalk. It wouldn't take long for the puddle to spread and climb up the bottom step. A bit more time and the water would rise to the porch.

"Did you ever think it would turn out like this?" Carla asked and turned to look at Ted.

Ted shook his head. He opened his arms and pulled Carla in close. She could hear his heartbeat and smelled his sour breath.

"We'd better go," Ted finally said, backing away from Carla into the house. "We've got to get out before the water is up to the door."

"Go where?"

Ted's gaze shot past Carla and out through the window. For the first time, Carla noticed that her normally fastidious husband hadn't shaved. Dark stubble covered his chin and the skin below his cheeks.

"I'm thinking we should head for the river. Might be our only hope."

The kayak was fire-engine red and looked strangely cheerful in the brown water that flowed in every direction Carla looked. Ted sat at the back calling out commands, as they

steered the kayak downtown. Carla could hear the steady thwack-thwack of a helicopter overhead but refused to take her eyes off the muddy brown water the street had become or her attention from Ted's shouted commands. Along the way, past numbered streets that went lower as they paddled west, Carla saw cars and bikes, and kids' royal blue and yellow plastic wagons float by. Occasionally, Carla heard shouts. She snuck glances up to the rooftops, where people stood waving their arms. Some even held striped bed sheets over their heads. They swayed and wheeled the bed sheets from left to right.

Carla tried to keep her mind on pulling back the water, then swiveling at the waist and dipping the other side of the paddle in. As they neared the river, Carla was astonished to see what looked like hundreds of boats and people floating on inner tubes and even flat pieces of bright-colored plastic. The bridge stretching over the river was thick with bodies, some holding banners over their heads. SOS, one banner read. Another said, PLEASE HELP US.

The noise became deafening. Ted steered them through a collection of motorboats and rafts, canoes and large black rubber inner tubes. Carla feared there wasn't a single empty channel in the river where they could paddle.

"To the right," Ted yelled.

Carla held her paddle down straight to stop the kayak's forward drift. She paddled rapidly forward next, to turn the boat around. Boats faced every which-way, some with pieces of plastic rigged atop wood. Others, like Carla and Ted's, were open to the elements.

All along the river boats rocked in the rain. Smoke from small grills in the center of the decks rose into the air. Carla smelled the aroma of grilled beef. There was an unmistakable scent of curry. Carla was sure she smelled coconut next and something like tomatoes and chilies. Paprika and lemon. Grilled fish. Perhaps that last aroma had been sausages.

In each of the boats, men and women worked. There were men with skin the shade of wet tree bark, dressed in white, their heads wrapped in pale blue cloth the color of bird's eggs. Next to the men was a boat full of women all in black, their heads and bodies, even their faces covered, so that all Carla could see of them were their eyes. In the very next boat stood a group of gypsies, their outfits as cheerful and bright as the neighboring boat's were somber and subdued.

"Please, have some food."

Carla turned when a hand brushed her arm.

The man had a long black beard and a small tight hat pressing down his curly black hair.

"Please eat," he said, handing Carla a plate covered with small lamb chunks in gravy, next to warm, flat round bread.

Carla took the plate and asked the man how much she owed.

"Nothing," the man said. "We have come to help."

Carla passed the plate to Ted who waved a hand while he shook his head.

"Tell him not to worry," the man said. "The food is very clean. We have come to rescue you."

“Who sent you?” Ted shouted to the man.

“No one,” the man said and bowed his head, as if Ted were an important dignitary. “We heard about the rain, so we have come. We were expecting it.”

“Expecting it?” Tom shouted back.

“Oh, yes,” the man said and laughed. “We knew it was only a matter of time.”

Carla passed the plate back to Ted.

“Eat. This is no time to be picky.”

Ted took the plate, gratefully tearing off a corner of bread, which he used to scoop up a lamb chunk dripping with gravy. That first bite made Ted realize how hungry he’d been. He remembered that he hadn’t eaten all day.

The man handed Carla a second plate. Carla thanked him and smiled. Like Ted, she quickly grasped the new reality – her fingers would serve as utensils. She was too famished to mind. The food was surprisingly good, the lamb tender and the gravy seasoned with hints of nutmeg, honey and cinnamon.

“When you are through, please, this way,” the man said to Carla. He gestured to a narrow passageway that led to the deeper part of the river.

“We have boats,” the man explained. “They will take you someplace safe.”

Before she saw the band, Carla heard the music. It was joyous, full of fast drum beats and horns, a kind of urban African music Carla had heard at some street fairs. The band played on the left side of a boat sitting smack in the center of the river, where the man had said they should go. A

woman singer, her head wrapped in a bright patterned cloth of reds, yellows and greens and a matching wrapped floor-length dress, danced and swayed in front of men clad in equally festive outfits.

Ted was uncharacteristically silent. Carla noticed that for the first time since these torrential rains began, she felt calm. Slowly, she stretched her lips into a wide, silly grin, and then began to giggle. The nightmare of the past weeks had tumbled into something so delightfully strange, she couldn’t do anything else.

Carla paddled up to the boat, then reached her oar out to touch the side, letting the kayak turn and float there. The band broke into a slow, sexy song, in a language Carla thought might be French.

“This way.”

Carla turned in the direction of the voice. The man was black as grief, dressed in a long dark purple robe. As Carla watched, the man dropped a narrow rope ladder into the river.

After climbing up the ladder and watching Ted do the same, Carla stood looking at what had once been their city. All that remained besides the bridge spanning the river was water.

“Here, sit. Relax,” the man said. He pointed to a vacant spot on the deck that was crowded with other people. A piece of plastic served as a shelter.

The rest of the afternoon and throughout the night, Carla drifted in and out of sleep. Ted held tightly to her hand. Occasionally, he reached out and hugged her close to his chest. Waking in the dark, Carla felt the boat rock. She knew they were on

their way. She had no idea where they might be heading.

For days, in every direction, all Carla could see was water. She and Ted ate small simple meals and slept.

In time, the rain ended and the sun emerged. The air warmed. A breeze lifted the plastic cover and dried Ted's rubber boots.

The next morning, Carla awoke to Ted tapping her on the shoulder.

"We're here," he said.

"Here? Where is here?" Carla asked.

The man who had helped Carla up the ladder was standing over her.

"We are in the place we have always been," he said and smiled.

The water in the bay was clear all the way to the bottom. Carla could see dazzling coral in an unimaginable array of colors, and tropical fish wriggling by.

They stepped off the boat and waded through water that was sparkling and warm. Seals, otters and giant turtles swam all around them, poking their heads out of the water to stare at the newcomers, their eyes wide with curiosity. Further out, humpback whales heaved themselves out of the water, in a dance that appeared to be designed for Carla and Ted's entertainment.

In the place where they landed, and in which the man said they had always been, there was no electricity or running water. Neither were there cars or buses, T.V., computers or the Internet, and not one single refrigerator, toilet or video game.

Time passed without ceremony. Waves continued to wash on shore. After what may have been a month,

but could have marked the end of a year or more, Carla and Ted sat down on the beach. In silence, they watched the sun rise.

Carla soon forgot what life had been like before. Ted recalled bits and pieces but felt those memories were better not discussed. They were cautioned by the people who had saved their lives that, this time, they shouldn't mess things up.

After an initial pink glow sewed itself along the horizon, the fiery orange sun lifted into the sky. Carla and Ted got to their feet and gave the new day that was ready to begin a glorious round of applause.

STEFAN FORRESTER

Philosophia Natura

I.

I burrow.

The talents of ants
test me.

I dig through
the notion of
'object.'

I trade with wasps –
nuggets of damp soil
for the unseeable.
Just one gets me everything there is,
or will be.

II.

I nest.
Silent rows of bricks
rise and rise
on a run of logic and ash

III.

I humble and tease.
Forgetting the society that made me.
I die quick and unwelcome.
I cut wings from ether
and wreck them on the ideal.
Shattered against a pane of glass.

Ruined
and eternal.

KUDZU TEA RECIPE

Oxford Stroud

*(As demonstrated in **The Amazing Story of Kudzu**)*

Oxford Stroud was a professor at Auburn University for years. He was a close friend of my grandfather Madison's, and his interest in kudzu rivaled James Dickey. His short story, "Henry," has recently been published in a local Auburn anthology, *Chinaberries and Crows*. It is available online from amazon and elsewhere.

Picking the kudzu leaves:

The best time to harvest kudzu is in the spring and early summer before they age and harden. Watch out for snakes! Kudzu is easily recognizable, and shouldn't be very difficult to distinguish from toxic plants such as poison ivy. If you aren't sure, be sure. It is a mistake you won't make twice.

Preparing the kudzu leaves:

Hang dry the kudzu leaves in a sunny window for two to three weeks. Simmer the dry leaves in a pot for about forty-five minutes. It is best sweetened with a little Black-Thistle Honey from your local beekeeper.

NOEL C. HOFFMAN

all done now

see the stand there now and climb up and sit down now and strap in and keep it in control, buddy. exhale through the mouth, real quiet whoosh, and inhale through the nostrils the damp wood and be calm now, the mist will be gone soon when the sun comes. find east and look.

see what you can now, buddy. get the work in now. the southern red oaks with another small stand there, white oaks with red orange leaves, scarlet oak with red scarlet, blackjack oaks in formation with the brown and chestnut oaks on the high ridge east and there dawn comes now purple and gray and dry. hickory, yellow poplars handsome and large and many small with no leaves now just the winter axis cups, small sassafras with yellow, a persimmon with yellow orange, the one black walnut we planted when he died, the black locusts with the bright yellow that stand by the creek and some red maples there. they bow their branches now and their colors to you now and applaud now with red and the paler under red claps and with yellow and the paler under yellow claps and you are good now down wind over the rye grass field that spring heat will take and form in to cardinal flower and blazing star and partridge pea and buzz buzz bees but just be ready now because it will be coming, buddy.

touch it up and dust it off now. going to go live chamber now, buddy. walnut warmer than steel. pull the ammunitions from pocket and let it take some warmth and soften it some. rub the hammer end and let it take some. feel the cold stamp letters circled around the cold bubble bump and feel this and read this. WINCHESTER 30.06 SPRG. let it take some. read this. WINCHESTER 30.06 SPRG. touch this again. go live chamber now.

wait now, buddy. take the tin water in now from his old tin and quiet and exhale through the mouth, real quiet whoosh, and wait there at the end now and listen to the flannel rubbed whoosh of the creek and it is speckled now with white chips from the rising yellow east and it was always heard that way and was always painted in the dawn. just keep listening now, buddy. always. let it take you now.

he would be frying the old kill and eggs now in the cast iron over the wood stove, waiting for you, buddy. walk back up the valley north now along the creek and stay near the rifle and lean in close now to the rifle to the oil musk of it on his right shoulder and then the sweet rye grass broken by foot and then travel from the damp wood and tobacco metallic creek and let go of his hand there now and go toward his earthy place with the sing song of fry, but maybe he is here now in the walnut and the stand and the land as always because he did it all and I remember him, but get out now, buddy, because here it comes out from the creek bank with bones weighing down its head foraging on the fallen hickory nuts and it is beauty and you are down wind and 120 away and good. click.

now think it through, buddy. clear behind the black cross close to the eye now and the finger has vulnerable flesh pushing and cushioning the power and death and exhale through the mouth and inhale and boom and kick back squeak to interrupt the silent dawn as crow caws ripple the splash on the ear and then stand up to really get the wood smoke on the north wind now. there it is, all done now.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES :

Karla Linn Merrifield has had some 400 poems appear in dozens of journals and anthologies. She has nine books to her credit, the newest of which are *Lithic Scatter* and *Other Poems* (Mercury Heartlink) and *Attaining Canopy: Amazon Poems* (FootHills Publishing). Visit her blog, *Vagabond Poet*, at <http://karlalinn.blogspot.com>.

Leslie Ann is a Ph D student in the field of English Literature. She is also an avid hiker who enjoys letting her legs carry her for long distances across both natural and urban landscapes. Her meditations while hiking have produced these poems.

Stephen Hartsfield is a writer and musician who resides in Jacksonville, AL. He received a B. S. in Wildlife Science from Auburn University in 1998 and subsequently worked on conservation and game management projects across the United States. Stephen has always been intrigued by the natural world and humanities' relationship to it. He has been published in the Auburn Circle, the literary magazine of Auburn University, and his music has received airplay as far away as Israel. Stephen's music has been recorded by bluegrass artists Grass It Up, a critically acclaimed band from Colorado Springs.

Kate Bolton Bonnici grew up in Alabama and graduated from Harvard University and New York University School of Law. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Southern Humanities Review*, *NANO Fiction*, *B O D Y*, *The Examined*

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Chaim ben Avram (Joshua Lazarus) is a poet from Philadelphia. A graduate of Temple University (BA) and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City (MA), Lazarus currently attends Sarah Lawrence's MFA-Writing program. He lives and writes in Honolulu, Hawai'i. You can find his most recent poetry in the forthcoming LUMINA Volume XII, Red Ochre's Black & White, and the Boiler Journal. He welcomes correspondence and can be reached at repairingtheword@gmail.com

Zack O'Neill is the author of *Soil of the Garden*, a finalist in the 2010 Faulkner-Wisdom creative writing competition. His work has appeared in *The Homestead Review*, *Ophelia Street*, *The Delinquent*, *As it Ought to Be*, and elsewhere. He received his MFA in 2011 from the University of South Carolina, where he was a James Dickey Fellow, editor of the literary journal *Yemassee*, and an instructor of composition and rhetoric in the First Year English program. He also taught undergraduate creative writing for the English department.

Recently he has taught writing courses for Sacramento City College, Sierra College, UC Davis, Cosumnes River College, and Academic Talent Search, a program for middle and high school students sponsored by Sacramento State University. He currently is a Writing Fellow at the University of Houston, where he teaches

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Peggy Aylsworth is a retired psycho-therapist, living in Santa Monica, CA. Her poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals throughout the U.S. and abroad, including *Beloit*

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Thomas Cochran was raised in Haynesville, Louisiana. His work includes the novels *Roughnecks* (Harcourt) and *Running the Dogs* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Non-fiction and poetry have appeared under his name in *Oxford American*, *Rattle*, *Farming Magazine*, and other publications. He currently lives with his wife on a mountain in rural northwest Arkansas.

Morgan Harlow's poems and other writing have appeared in *Washington Square*, *Seneca Review*, *Descant*, *The Tusculum Review*, *The Moth*, and elsewhere. Her debut poetry collection, *Midwest Ritual Burning* (2012), is published in the UK by Eyewear Publishing. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and holds an MFA from George Mason University.

Brent House, a contributing editor for *The Tusculum Review*, is a native of Hancock County, Mississippi, where he raised cattle and watermelons on the family farm. His poetry collection, *The Saw Year Prophecies*, was published by Slash Pine Press.

Michael Frazer is a Ph.D. candidate at Auburn University. Mostly working in postmodern fiction centered on the Southern Californian landscape

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Eman received an MFA in poetry from Arizona State University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Illuminations*, *Blue Guitar*, *Psychic Meatloaf*, *The American Literary and Ilonot Review*. She was the recipient of a first honorable mention during the Calyx 2010 Louis Cranston Memorial Prize for her poem "The Blossoming."

Stefan Forrester is an Associate Professor of English and Philosophy at the University of Montevallo in Alabama. He holds an MFA in creative writing from Southern Illinois University and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Rochester (NY). His poetry has recently appeared in *Sou'wester* and *Flash*, and some of his current academic work can be found in *Literature Compass* and *Southwest Philosophy Review*.

Kenneth Vanderbeek is a man of the world, not yet from extensive travel, but by way of his reverence for nature. He has studied at the Bennington Writers Workshop, Vermont, and lives and writes in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Eyck-Berringer Endowed Chair in English at The College of Idaho, **Diane Raptosh** has been the recipient of three distinguished fellowships in literature from the Idaho Commission on the Arts. The Boise Poet Laureate for 2013, she awaits publication of her fourth book of poems, *American Amnesiac*, to be published by Etruscan Press in August.

Luisa Villani is a former Wallis

Annenberg Fellow at The University of Southern California, a Bucknell Younger Poet, an Academy of American Poets Prize awardee, and a winner of an Associated Writing Programs Intro Journals Award. Her work has appeared in *The New England Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Literary Review*, *Kaleidoscope Magazine*, *The Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Third Coast*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Hotel Americana* and many other journals. She has taught English in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, and currently resides in Princeton, New Jersey.

Patty Somlo has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize three times, was a finalist in the Tom Howard Short Story Contest and is the author of *From Here to There and Other Stories*. Her work has appeared in numerous journals including the *Los Angeles Review*, *the Santa Clara Review*, *the Jackson Hole Review*, *WomenArts Quarterly*, *The Flagler Review*, *Guernica*, and *Switchback*, and in seven anthologies, including, *Solace in So Many Words*, winner of the Next Generation Indie Book Award, and the just-released *Puzzles of Faith and Patterns of Doubt*.

Noel C. Hoffman is a Canadian raised in Alabama. He holds a B.A. from Auburn University in International Trade and an M.B.A. from the University of New Orleans. He would like to grow Viognier outside of Austin one day. He is a staff editor for *Gigantic Magazine* and co-founded and co-edits the writing community www.simmr.org. Previous work can be found at *The Monarch Review*.

Eleanor Leonne Bennett is a 16 year old internationally award winning photographer and artist who has won first places with National Geographic, The World Photography Organisation, Nature's

Best Photography, Papworth Trust, Mencap, The Woodland trust and Postal Heritage. Her photography has been published in the *Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *BBC News Website* and on the cover of books and magazines in the United states and Canada. Her art is globally exhibited, having shown work in London, Paris, Indonesia, Los Angeles, Florida, Washington, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, Spain, Germany, Japan, Australia and The Environmental Photographer of the year Exhibition (2011) amongst many other locations. She was also the only person from the UK to have her work displayed in the National Geographic and Airbus run See The Bigger Picture global exhibition tour with the United Nations International Year Of Biodiversity 2010.

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M.P. begins his second year of Auburn University's M.A. program in English Literature where he works as a graduate teaching assistant and reads for *Southern Humanities Review*. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming from *Tampa Review*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Canary*, *Town Creek*, and many others and was selected by Jennifer Elise Foerster for the Robert Hughes Mount, Jr. Poetry Prize this year. *Live at Lethé*, his first poetry collection, is forthcoming from Sweatshoppe Publications. Visit his author's page for more info: ecopoiesis.com

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Robin Conn Ward: Executive Design Editor

Robin is the mastermind of our website design, having achieved a degree in computer networking from Cochise College. He is currently pursuing a degree in web development from ASU. Robin's interests lie in the hyper-real, the increasing development of an artificial world in the face of an eroding biosphere. That is to say, he's beaten Mario over a thousand times.

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Arthur Wilke is a provocateur of environmental studies of the literary and socio-political realms. Known for undertaking such extended expeditions as the Appalachian Trail, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, as well as many others without the privilege of a name, Arthur studies the real world relationships of humanity, wilderness, and environment.

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Jane Alford: *Assistant Editor, Nonfiction*

Jane is our resident ecofeminist and strict grammarian (someone around here has to be). She's always on call, reminding us of the right place for a direct object and when we're describing women as such. Her main interest is high modernism, and she spends many sleepless nights pondering the "whatness of a thing." She enjoys jewelry making, fat cats, and red wine.

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Alesha Dawson, currently residing in Pelham, Alabama, has a BA in English from the University of Montevallo and an MSc in Medieval Literature from the University of Edinburgh. In general, some of her favorite things include: Islay and Speyside Scotch, the Highlands, castles, Old English, camp fires, penguins, new notebooks, maps, train travel, lots of layers, flannel, her knife collection, leaves, puzzles, hot tea, eggs on toast, teaching, learning, and singing.

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John is the layout designer of the group and the new fish. He works at the University of Montevallo, but only part time so as to keep an open schedule for various vices. He loves banana pudding, Zeppelin, and his one pair of pants that fit just right, and he's down to go hike with you any day of the week, if you ask him. He doesn't mind taking your batteries to be recycled for you, either, if you ask nicely.

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John Abbott: *Assistant Editor, Poetry*

John Abbott is a writer, musician, English instructor, and avid reader. When he isn't involved with one of these activities, he enjoys walking the bogs and woods of Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he lives with his wife and daughter. For information about his writing, please visit johnabbottauthor.com.

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Doves - Eleanor Leonne Bennett

“Only Connect . . .”
— E.M. Forster, *Howards End*



May the Kudzu grow!
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