

Stonecrop Review

A JOURNAL OF URBAN NATURE WRITING, ART & PHOTOGRAPHY



ISSUE 2: ROOTS/ROUTES

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ROOTS/ROUTES COVER IMAGE

Untitled by Lani Cox

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A Note from the Editors

“ I’m not sure how or why we decided to make this issue a double themed one. Perhaps during one of our editorial meetings over Skype, Holly or I threw the ‘routes’ theme out there and the other heard ‘roots’. However it happened, we loved the idea of using these homophones together. After all, both routes (roads, sidewalks, alleyways, and desire lines) and roots (street trees, park trees, trees tearing through concrete) are central to the character and shape of cities. The pieces we eventually selected beautifully combine these two themes: from the tree-lined roads of a factory complex, to a single ficus on a busy freeway; and from walking routes through Seattle, to the challenges of navigating urban green spaces with a mobility disability. We also meet sidewalk trees in Prague, Uruguay, and West Philly.

I hope you’ll find some reading inspiration over in our Readers Corner. For ‘roots’ inspired reading. Alison Green reviews Bob Gilbert’s *Ghost Trees: Nature and People in a London Parish*, and for a ‘routes’ themed read, take a look at Hetty Mosforth’s review of *Hidden Nature: A Voyage of Discovery* by Alys Fowler. Check out our Editors Picks as well for other great urban nature reads!

Elsewhere in the magazine we have a selection of short stories, essays, photography, and art exploring the wider theme of urban nature. *Rest in Peace*, Mr. Dionne by H. E. Casson, explores childhood, the death of a pet, and an urban ravine; while in Jeff Bakkensen’s *The Day of the Fire*, walking the dog leads to uncomfortable encounters with strangers, and pregnancy loss and fire haunt the narrator and the city. M. R. Neis’s *Aching Through Mexico’s Ancient Cities* immerses us

in the ruined and crumbling cities of Mexico and the heartache of young love.

We’ve got non-fiction pieces from Simone Martel, who writes about her family’s history of urban farming in *Fantasy Farmer*; Eric Butler, an urban ecologist whose work forces him to confront the realities of life for the homeless trying to survive in the city’s green spaces; and Suzanne Segady, who gives us a glimpse of the birds in her garden in *Naming Nature, Naming Myself* (this essay was beautifully illustrated by Mariell Fotland).

Poetry comes from M.C. Aster and Vibha Rohilla, who bring us a glimpse of urban coyotes and nature in Bangalore, respectively. And we have two photo essays: *Delhi at Dawn, Berlin at Dusk* by Rebecca Ruth Gould contrasts a dawn visit to New Delhi’s Lodhi Gardens with a night time encounter with Berlin’s Potsdamer Platz, both revealing a different approach to nature in the city. Kristin Fouquet’s beautiful black and white photography in *After Barry: A City Spared* explores a city prepared for a disaster that was narrowly missed. Artwork comes from Serge Lecomte and C. R. Resetarits. Serge’s watercolours depict surreal urban landscapes and text messaging crows, while C.R. uses collage to create fun and inventive cityscapes.

It has been a privilege to bring these pieces to the world. I hope you enjoy them and that they inspire you to look at nature in the city a little differently.



Naomi Racz | Editor



Creating the second issue of Stonecrop has been just as wonderful an adventure as the first issue was, and has in many ways felt like a completely new experience. The biggest challenge was the sheer number of truly beautiful submissions. We were spoiled for choice, and honoured once again that so many people have trusted us with their works; there were many difficult decisions as we put this issue together. Nevertheless, we feel we've selected a range of pieces that complement one another well, flesh out the Roots/Routes theme strongly, and explore urban nature in a thought-provoking and multifaceted way. We are excited to share this collection with you now.

The theme of Roots/Routes allows us to explore many different aspects of urban nature both below and above ground, as well as at the interface between them; it also allows us to explore relationship—or rootedness—to place. Like Naomi, I don't recall quite how the idea for this theme emerged, but as soon as it did, it felt like a perfect fit for our second issue. The theme in our first issue of Stonecrop, *Overgrown*, explored a kind of wildness in cities; this new theme explores the vectors that that wildness moves along. The pieces in this section explore nature found along roadways and sidewalks (*The Freeway Ficus* by Matt McGee; *WEST PHILLY SIDEWALKS* by Yvonne, *Walking Seattle* by Priscilla Long); they examine how we root ourselves to a place through the trees we (or family long gone) have planted there (*The Lime Tree* by Veronika Opatřilová); and they highlight how routes can be inaccessible to some (*All Are(n't) Welcome* by Jessie Eoin).

I am especially excited at the diversity of visual worlds and artistic voices in this issue. In the Roots/Routes section we find a tree at the edge of a sidewalk being used to speak to passersby ("En mi cuerpo decido yo" by Sarah Simon). We are also excited to

present our first multimedia piece in the form of a film; screenshots from *Audacity* by Samaré Gozal take us on an exploration of a tree that has grown up through a sidewalk. In the rest of the journal, we are transported to Delhi and Berlin at dawn and dusk by Rebecca Ruth Gould; dropped into wild, playful, and joyfully colourful landscape painted by Serge Lecomte; and invited to trace cityscapes and green spaces in C. R. Resetaris' beautiful abstract collages. Mariell Fotland's striking birds provide a beautiful accompaniment to Suzanne Segady's reflection of self through the nature in her backyard. And finally, Kristin Fouquet's photo essay of New Orleans brings our issue to a beautiful and poignant close—continuing the trend established in the first issue of ending the journal with black and white!

I had the privilege of creating the artwork for many of the remaining written submissions, and, as with the first issue, found it a true joy to sit with the texts and sketch for them. In *Rest in Peace, Mr. Dionne* by H. E. Casson, a beloved pet is laid to rest in a cold winter ground; In Jeff Bakkensen's short story *The Day of the Fire*, a walk through the neighbourhood takes place against a backdrop of quiet loss. A coyote snatches food and runs in *Alfresco* by M.C. Aster, while a monsoon rages in *Bengaluru to Bangalore* by Vibha Rohilla; tomatoes are canned in *Fantasy Farmer* by Simone Martel. And in the Roots/Routes section, lime trees flourish, a ficus bursts through a freeway grate, and watercolour sketches document walks through Seattle...

We wish you joy as you explore this issue.



Holly McKelvey | Illustrator

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ROOTS/ROUTES



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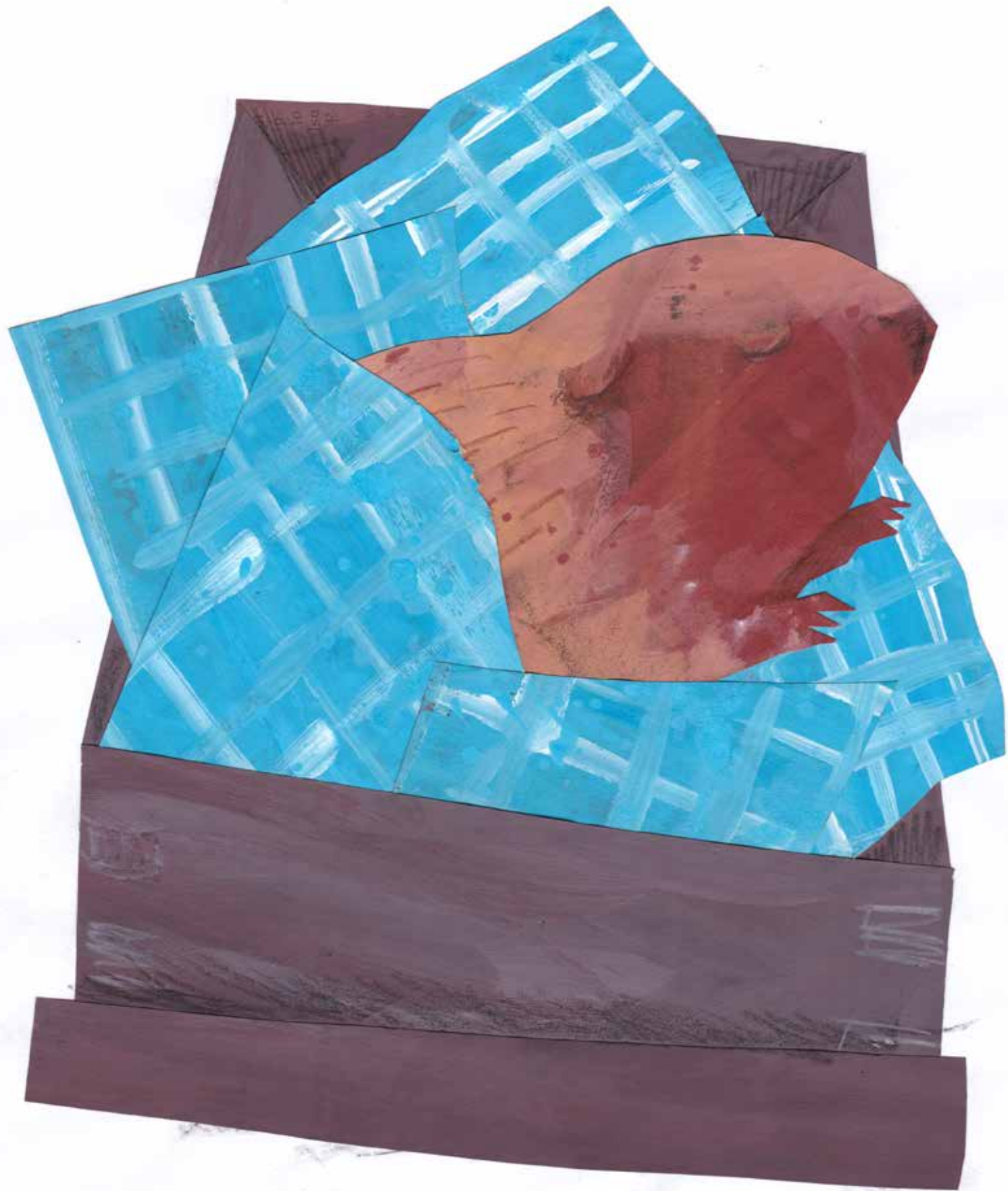


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Rest In Peace, Mr. Dionne

H. E. Casson



H. E. Casson lives in Canada's most populous city, Toronto. For the first time, in middle age, they have a backyard. They are not sure how they feel about all that green. Their work has been published in *Apparition Lit*, *Room*, *Cricket*, *Fireweed* and *Today's Parent*, among others.

Mr. Dionne was dead. Prone to marking fingers with his overlong incisors, he was nonetheless beloved by my older sister, Johanna. She wore Doc Martin boots and had earned the sometime nickname Angry Joh, but she was also the neighbourhood repository for unwanted and unloved pets. This person's neglected hamster or that person's chew-tailed rat would soon find a perch on Johanna's shoulder. While I was dodging projectiles for touching her clothing, a rodent could loose its bowels on her shirt and she'd show it nothing but tenderness.

Mr. Dionne had been similarly under-appreciated. Perhaps he was a classroom cast-off or a wanderer found in the hallways of our decaying high-rise. It was a building gone feral. Shots woke us up like mis-set alarms. Music from parties that started as escapism and ended with sirens shook pictures off my bedroom wall. Mothers cooked meals from boxes and cans and prayed for the souls of their children, before chasing them through the halls with spatulas or kitchen knives. It was there that Mr. Dionne, named for Dionne Warwick, lived and died—a golden brown football of fur gone still.

Behind our apartment was a ravine. We didn't spend much time there, raised as we had been to believe that concrete boxes meant safety. My family met in malls, not parks, and played in bowling alleys, not fields. We would no more go wander the ravine than casually walk off our thirteenth floor balcony. Johanna was an outlier. She joined the school's camping club and got her lifeguard certificate. Like a changeling or cuckoo's egg, she had been left among us with no instructions, so she mostly raised herself. It was she who proposed we wrap Mr. Dionne in a worn-through tea towel, use a shoebox in place of a coffin, and bury him in the ravine.

We were both dating neighbourhood boys. Hers was sturdy and taciturn, mine wispy and reserved. They agreed to be pall-bearers and gravediggers along with Joh and me. A plastic kitchen spoon, not up to the task, was repurposed as a shovel. With winter coats as mourning clothes, we carried Mr. Dionne to the elevator.

"Feel the box," she demanded. "It's still warm."

Dutifully, I rested my hand on the box. Perhaps it was warm, though likely from the way she held it close, as though in an embrace.

The trees were dressed in their freshest snow, hinting at the origins of the ravine. An ice age that my family did not believe in had left behind sand and soil. The Humber River had then washed it away. 12,000 years later, we stood under trees that had grown there for eons and said goodbye to a creature so domesticated that nothing like it would be found in its original home of South America.

Our thoughts remained purely local while we dug in dirt that, near-frozen, did not want our offering. The spoon gave out, so we dropped to our knees and dug with our hands. I remember the ravine seeming pristine, though the city was often called in to remove the garbage flung from balconies when the chutes were clogged or broken. But it did not welcome our human encroachment, teasing us with our own vulnerability. Indeed, a body would be found there, years later, by

children searching for a basketball that had rolled away from the protection of pavement and down a grassy hill.

The leafless ashes, birches and maples stood sentry while Joh lowered Mr. Dionne into the too hollow grave. The boys held flashlights, lighting up the spot like a stage.

"May you rest in peace, Mr. Dionne." She stood, pushing dirt over the box with her toe.

On it she placed a yellow flower whose ancestor had crossed the ocean from Asia centuries ago. It's new-cut life contrasted with the frozen brown sameness of leaves and pine needles.

"I'm cold." My wispy boy pulled me close and held me together.

"I guess that's it." Johanna turned away and headed back up the ravine path to our building, leading our parade of sorrow back to our safe grey box.

I looked up at the night clouds, mirroring the snow-whitened tree tops, and shivered, feeling too small under all that sky.

"Wait for me." I sped up, leaving behind the forest, the snow, and all that unsettling space.

I wanted nothing more than to wash the earth from underneath my nails.



Greenspace, Skyline

C. R. Resetarits



C. R. Resetarits is a writer and collagist. Her collages have appeared recently in *Midway*, *New Southern Fugitive*, and *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts* and will soon be featured in *Gasher*, *Sonder Review*, *Pretty Owl Poetry*, and *The Nashville Review*. She lives in Faulkner-riddled Oxford, Mississippi.

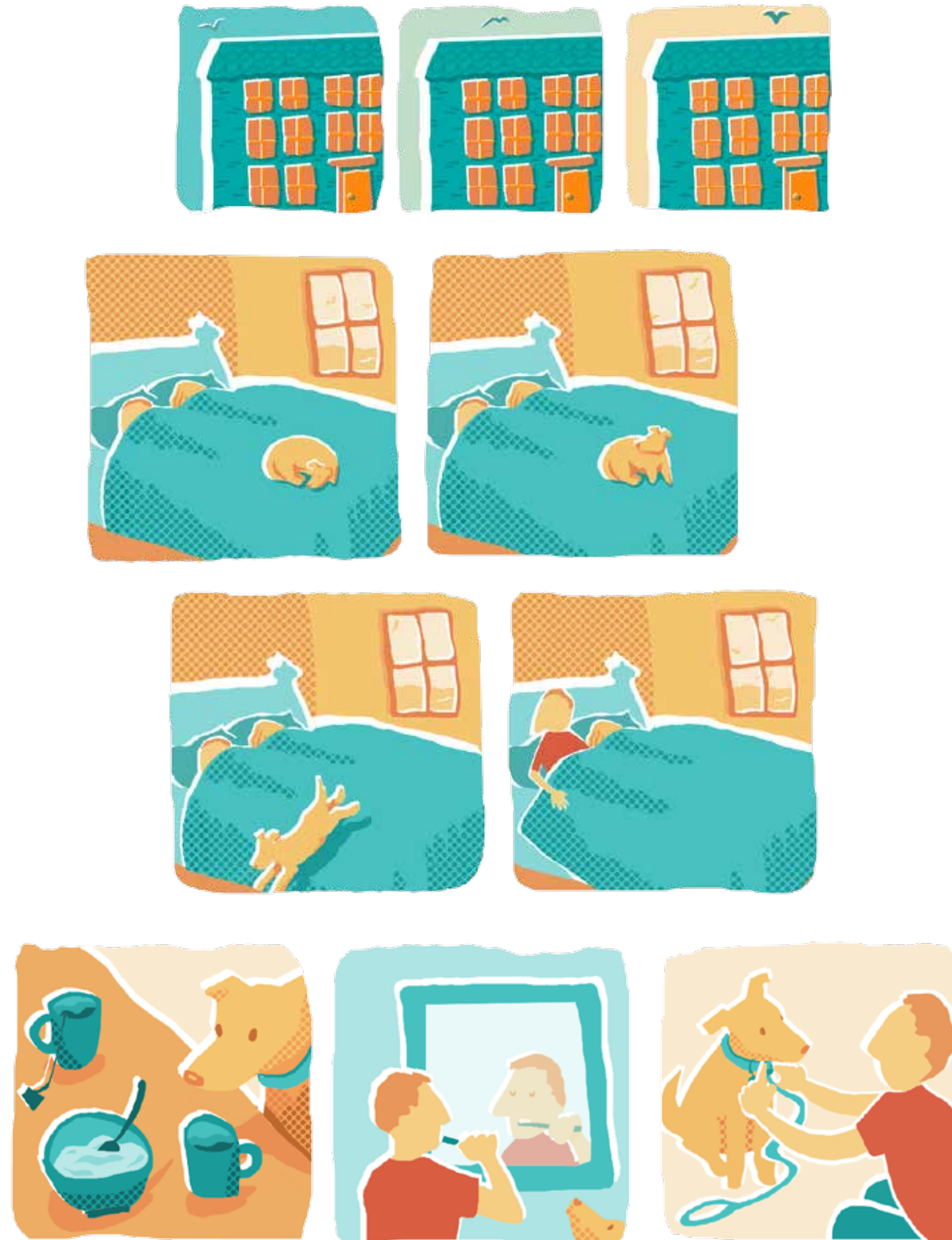


PREVIOUS PAGE: *Greenspace #1*

RIGHT: *Greenspace #4*



Skyline



The Day of the Fire

Jeff Bakkensen



Jeff Bakkensen lives in Boston. Recent work has appeared in *A-Minor Magazine*, *Oblong Magazine*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, and *The Antigonish Review*.

There's a special smile when they see you walking a dog. Conspiratorial. Like, *Ah yes, one of the tribe*. Mei said pregnant women get it too, earlier than you'd think. But the funny thing is, we wouldn't get the smile when all three of us were out together. Like people wanted us to pick a side. Have a child or get a dog; both at once was just selfish.

Lola wakes me when she jumps down from our bed and sticks her nose against the gap at the bottom of the door. Mei will sleep through the day while I work in the spare bedroom. Then Lola and I will walk her to the subway and send her back to the hospital. She used to work days, but nights pay more. She says nighttime is when she can think most clearly.

We have yogurt for breakfast/dinner, coffee and herbal tea. We brush our teeth. Then Lola and I leave for our walk.

If I could speak to Lola, I'd tell her that if life is a series of reinventions, I still get surprised at the version of ourselves we've landed on.

But our choice of words is limited. "Sit," means, *Sit*. "Wait," means, *Keep sitting*. A scratched door means, *I would like to go out*. A tugged leash means, *I would like to go over there*. We can only talk about the things we can talk about.

Our apartment is on the third floor of a three-story brick row house that hasn't quite hit its upswing towards being nice again. The carpeted staircase Lola bounds down, nearly falling forward in her excitement, is scuffed and threadbare. We pass through a tiled foyer, and then go down one more flight to the basement, where the back door leads to an alley. The two basement apartments sit at either end of a concrete hallway, the boiler room



and a washer/dryer fitted between them. Lola walks ahead of me, nose to the mouse droppings lying along the baseboards. I'm always a little apprehensive of what she might find. A year ago, just after we moved here, she found a body.

We were on our way to the back door, just like today. Lola had gone down ahead of me, and when I reached the bottom of the staircase, she was standing over a man lying on his stomach in the middle of the hallway. He was wearing jeans and a light jacket. As I watched, she bent down to lick the area around his mouth. I made a sound like *Hepp!* which was the fastest sound I could make, and ran to pull her away.

But a funny thing happened. The man's eyes popped open, he rolled over and became a living thing and then my downstairs neighbor, Jonathan. I'd met him while we were moving in.

His eyes wandered the walls until he saw me. He sat up. Lola was beside herself with joy.

"I think I lost my keys," said Jonathan.

I helped him stand. He looked around the floor and patted his jacket and pants pockets. He tapped his apartment door, and the door swung open. His keys were on a table just inside.

"Oh," he said. "Fuck."

It takes time, when you move to a new place, to settle your sense of what's normal and what's not. You find your neighbor sleeping on the basement floor, and you think, *That's just the way things are here*, because you have no context to know anything different. *Wish the broker had told me about that*. Then the next day you don't see him, and the next day you don't see him, and

eventually a year goes by and you're still reminded of those first scattering days every time you pass through the basement, and you think how strange it was you ever didn't know the things you know now.

We continue through the back door and into the alley. It's a crisp late summer day; the windows of the building across the alley glare in checkerboard pattern.

There's no mystery to the interior lives of dogs. I can tell Lola's mood by her walk. There's the prance, the buck against the leash, the salamander scuttle when she spots a squirrel. I have one style of walking, so far as I can tell. But maybe everyone in the apartments abutting the alley is standing by their windows watching, taking notes as I step, as I stumble, as I stride.

We stop at a gravel parking space so Lola can pee, and then turn onto another alley that slopes up to a residential street leading to the park. On the sidewalk, we pass two men dressed for work. Lola sniffs them as they walk by.

The park is a green strip running from the train station at Back Bay to the one at Forest Hills. A bike path weaves a sine wave between tennis and basketball courts, community gardens filling the irregular slices left over. The house to the left of the entrance has a rainbow flag hanging from a window, and on the door is a poster that says *Immigrants Welcome Here*, with a picture of a mother holding a child. The train itself runs beneath us.

It's the type of place where you have a kid before moving to the suburbs. That's why it was so jarring last week when someone sprayed *Trump eats babies* in blue paint across the concrete wall at one end of the tennis court. We buzzed for a few days about who might have done

it: surely not the family with the *Immigrants Welcome Here* poster. Someone from outside the neighborhood trying to troll, trigger, or otherwise provoke a reaction. If that was the goal then it worked; the graffiti's still there, and it bothers me whenever I walk past.

At one point in the distant past, the train ran above ground and the city bulldozed a swath of buildings to put in a highway that was never finished. So they gave us a park instead. The neighborhood then was mostly poor and Black, which is probably why someone thought it was a good place for a highway, and as the neighborhood has Whitened, the park has gentrified, acquiring first basketball courts and gardens, then tennis courts, and finally a dog park, which is where Lola pulls me now.

We cross a street with traffic at a standstill in both directions, and pass more commuters and a few morning joggers. The dog park is a converted basketball court with a fence around the perimeter. The hoops still stand, netless, at both ends.

The morning regulars are out in force: Tivoli, Max, Ruby and Rosie, along with their owners. They are, in order: German Shepherd, retriever, and mutt sisters with border collie bodies and reddish fur. Lola's a goldendoodle.

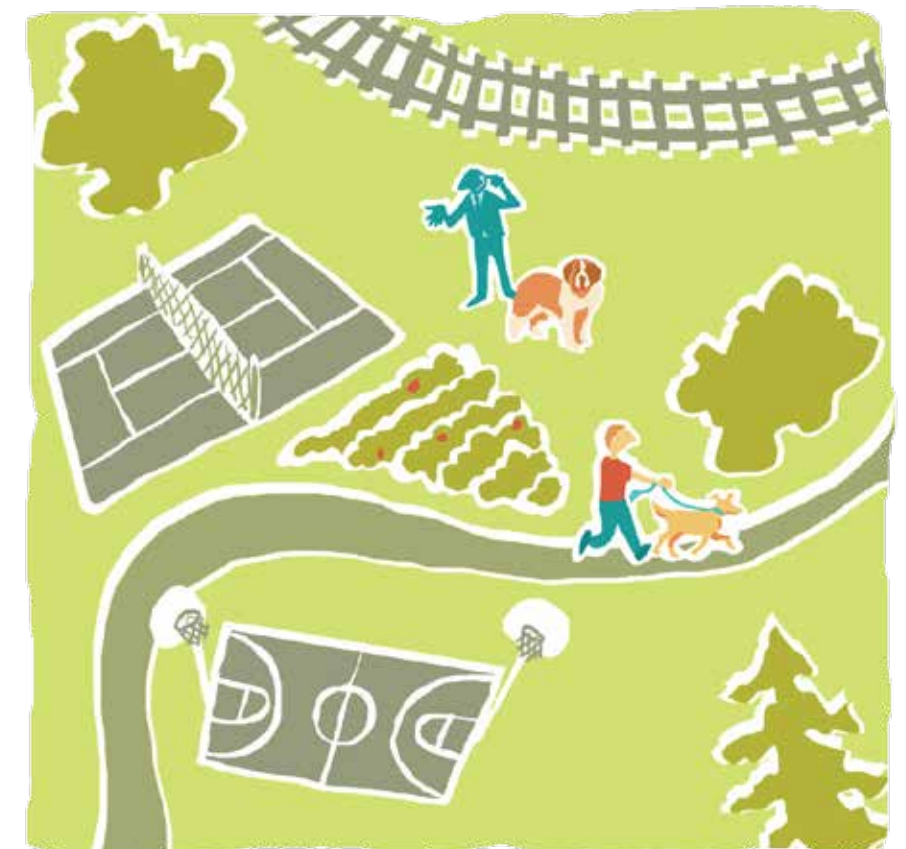
The breed is important because that's how we introduce ourselves. "I'm Jack and this is Russell, and he's a Jack Russell Terrier." Or if the new dog's some undetermined mix, the owner

will scrunch up his face like a Harvard grad who's aware of the effect the Harvard name can have, and say, "We don't really know for sure. We haven't done any genetic testing."

Which is like, *Alright buddy, keep on saving the world*.

Lola and I go in through the double gate, and she runs to join the pack swirling around centercourt. Rosie, sniffing the wall, sees Lola and runs up to her. She bows, then spins around and bows again. Lola takes the bait, chasing her around the edge of the park. They pass Ruby, who gets caught up in the chase and then turns on Lola, who has to slam on the brakes to avoid being caught, and almost runs into Rosie going the other way.

I give a wave to Ruby and Rosie's owner, Jay, and walk over to say hello.



Dog and owner pairs come and go at regular intervals. The gate opens and a man in a suit walks in behind a big St. Bernard. He has earbuds in and he's talking on the phone. He picks up a ball and waves it in front of the St. Bernard's face and throws it. The dog doesn't flinch.

"Any plans for the weekend?" asks Jay.

Mei and I are going out to the suburbs to celebrate her mom's birthday. Jay asks if they're pressuring us to have kids, and I feel my brows pinch. *Did I tell him?* But no, of course not. And he wouldn't recognize Mei if he saw her on the street; I'm the morning walker.

"Not yet," I say.

We're interrupted by the man in the suit yelling through his headset.

"Well why the hell isn't it on my calendar?" he says.

He leans down and guides his dog towards a potential playmate.

"Do you hear yourself? Why would I want to have that conversation?"

Jay and I look at each other like, *Some people*. I take out my phone to check the time. It's just before 8 a.m. It's too early to be yelled at, early enough that the person on the other end of the phone probably knew they were going to get yelled at when they woke up this morning. Hopefully it's not his wife. A secretary. Maybe she, assuming it's a she, gets yelled at every morning. Maybe she got yelled at on the first day of the job and thought, *That's just the way things are here*.

I'm reminded of a story, which I whisper to Jay as we watch the man in the suit pace through the swirl of dogs. Mei's med school had a cadaver lab, and at the end

of the anatomy course, all of the donors' families were invited to speak at a ceremony in the school auditorium. Most people said they were thankful something good came out of their loved one's death, maybe they told a quick story about a doctor who'd been helpful. But one woman brought a stack of photographs that she went through one by one, using each to illustrate another of her husband's qualities: here being generous, here empathic, etc. At first it was kind of heartwarming, even though we weren't close enough to really see the pictures. Then her tone shifted. She said her husband deserved better than his last years had given him. He'd suffered tremendously. *Maybe you all*, pointing to us, *could have saved him if you'd listened, but why would you?* Illness was profit. The goal was to treat, not cure. We rustled awkwardly. An administrator tried to guide her offstage. He was a brilliant man. Charming. Everyone else had a turn, why not her? When the last deathbed picture was turned over, she left the podium in tears. We could hear her yelling outside the auditorium before she finally went home.

"People have no self awareness," says Jay.

The man in the suit laps the park and comes to a stop a few feet from us. He looks at us and rolls his eyes as he points to his earbuds.

We both nod.

"I think that's my cue," says Jay.

Like, *Don't involve us in your bullshit, man*.

Jay calls Ruby and Rosie, and I call Lola, and we leave the park together and then go our separate ways.

Are they pressuring us to have kids?

Lola and I cross the street and pass the basketball

court to our left, the house with the rainbow flag to our right. Beyond the basketball court, I see the defaced tennis court. *Trump eats babies*. As we turn onto the street next to ours, I dial city services and navigate to a live person.

"Hello," I say. "I'd like to report a graffiti."

At home, I check in on Mei to make sure she's fallen asleep. Then I pour Lola a bowl of food and head into the spare bedroom.

A boxed crib lies propped against one wall, a pollen-dusted post-it stuck on top reading, *Build me*. The crib needs to be moved to storage, but I haven't been able to find the time.

I journal now. That was our therapist's advice. *If you can't say it, write it down*. Today I write, *Mei got home around 6:30 and Lola and I woke up...*

Then I begin to labor through the morning emails. I consult for small businesses, installing and testing network security software. It's self-directed work; I'm salesperson, technical support, and account services rolled into one. The only immediate item today is a suspicious email forwarded—stupidly—for me to decide whether it's an attempt at phishing.

I'm most productive when I take frequent breaks. Lola lies in a patch of sun below the open window while I walk around the apartment, or stretch and refill my water bottle, or sometimes just stand and look at my phone.

I'm doing just that when I realize the room has filled with smoke.

It's like when you're in the shower and the water turns from hot to scalding. I've been smelling smoke for a

while without noticing, and suddenly it's too smoky not to notice.

I run to the kitchen and open the oven. I open the apartment door and sniff the staircase. It's not in our building. I go back into the spare bedroom and look out onto the street. Lola puts her paws up on the window sill beside me. A woody skein is winding towards us over the park, but I can't see anything more specific. I walk around the apartment shutting windows and crack our bedroom door to make sure Mei's still asleep before heading up to the roof.

On my way upstairs, I search the Twitter feeds for the Boston fire and police departments, but there's nothing there. Nothing under local news. The air is thicker on the roof and Lola doesn't want to follow me, so I prop the door and walk to the edge on my own. Across the park, a building is on fire. Three spouts of charcoal smoke gush from the top row of windows, combine, and spread into the morning sky. I trace the smoke as it rises. It has an urgency almost, hurtling up and then, more slowly, out.

The park laid out beneath me is quiet. A mother pushes a stroller along the bike path. Two older women lob a ball back and forth across the tennis court. I wonder if they haven't smelled the smoke. For a moment it feels like I'm the only one who's noticed something's wrong.

Finally there's a siren in the distance, getting louder as its pitch slowly rises and falls, and then stops. From this



angle, I can't see down into the street across the park, but presumably the firemen have arrived. Lola whines behind me. I take her back down into the apartment and secure the roof door behind us.

There's no point in sitting back down to work. There is a fire in the neighborhood, and I have to go see it. I text Mei, *Fire in the neighborhood!*, and hear her phone ping in the other room.

I check Twitter again while Lola pees in the gravel parking space, and @bostonfire finally has an update about an apartment fire a few blocks away. We head that way, passing the tennis court, where the game of lob is still in progress. No one's been by yet to clean up the graffiti.

The fire is on a street that dead-ends against the far side of the park: nice old bow-fronted buildings with commanding entryways and a fenced strip of grass down the middle. Blue lights flash on the flowerbeds along the bike path, and Lola's strides get shorter and shorter as we approach. We turn onto the street and suddenly we're up close to it with a different angle of the same three windows piping smoke, and there, yes, a tongue of flame reaches out to scorch the brick.

Have you ever stopped to watch a fire? One Fourth of July when I was a kid, there was a fire in a house on the back side of the hill where we lived. A neighbor and I snuck away from our family barbeques and ran down to watch. We stayed until the firemen carried a woman out onto the crumbling porch and made us go home. We were told later on that she'd fallen asleep with a lit cigarette in her hand. Poof.

There's no one to carry out here, it seems. Two gawkers stand by a wooden barrier halfway down the street and a police officer leans against its far side. Lola and I walk

over and join them. The firemen in their helmets and black and yellow jackets walk slowly back and forth between the fire engines and the building. One of them has his jacket open. Everything seems utterly normal.

If there were a fire in our building, Lola would bark and scratch at the bedroom door to wake up Mei, and we would help her dress and gather our essentials. I would hold Mei's hand and carry Lola as we made our way outside, and everyone gathered to watch would break into applause when they saw us because we were so calm and so brave, and we finally would have suffered something public to match our private sense of tragedy.

Because you can talk about a fire. On those scattering aftermath days, people will want to know where you were, what you were doing. You'll wait until you have the whole room's attention, and then begin, *On the day of the fire*. You were barbequing. You were heating some water for tea, and you got a feeling in your gut that something just wasn't right, and then the phone rang. The first kernel of the microwavable popcorn that you'd put into the microwave had just popped when you heard...

Lola stands and sniffs, and I look up to see the man in the suit from this morning. His St. Bernard is pulling on the leash, and he's got his feet spread apart so he doesn't get pulled over.

I bet he's been walking around yelling at his phone this whole time.

He turns towards me, and I realize I've been staring. A light of cautious recognition comes over his face, and his hand comes up like he's not even sure what it's doing, and he gives me a little wave. Then my hand comes up, and I wave back.

Alfresco

M. C. Aster



M. C. Aster's poetry reflects her varied biography: born in Yugoslavia, life in Ethiopia during formative years, work in Europe. In 2018, Aster's poems appeared in *Slipstream*, and *Meat for Tea/The Valley Review*. Aster sometimes reads new poems to her two endangered Mojave Desert tortoises; their silent critique is usually dead right.

veiled in blue murk
the night has speckled

the ancient cedars
with silver stars

and a pale lunar edge
arrives to cast

a timid light on
a coyote foraging
inside a toppled bin—

Blink!
—and he's gone
lickety-split
with a mangled tin
of moonlit pizza



Aching Through Mexico's Ancient Cities

M. R. Neis



M. R. is not as fond of travelling as he used to be. But he still likes singing, writing, teaching (especially English as a second language) and finding other ways to make himself useful. He lives in Southern California with his family.



Fodor's Mexico, 1980 said:

Of Spain's Sevilla it is stated that, "Quien no ha visto Sevilla, no ha visto maravilla." In the vast, thumb-like peninsula in Mexico's southeast which much of the English-speaking world, with ungrammatical simplicity, calls "the Yucatan," the marvels are the stately cities of the Maya.



The ache. It accompanied me everywhere, like a ringing in my ear, and wouldn't stop. I was horrified when it dawned on me that no matter how I struggled, the ache would continue for a long time. I did not know until then that it could be so awful.



In the beginning of 1982, the road that passed by Xel-Ha on the Yucatan Peninsula was two lanes only. My hair was still wet, and I was trying to make up my mind. Everyone else knew they were going to Cancún, but I was bone-weary of tourists and other things.



We started our Yucatan trip from Mexico City. We saw plenty of the ADO buses, reassuring in their professional appearance—not like *Flecha Amarilla*, literally translated, "Yellow Arrow." I suppose the "Arrow" name was meant to convey a spirit of swiftness, and efficiency, but to us American students, *Flecha* anything quickly became the standard of a five-times purchased-over wreck of a school bus that should have been in the scrap yard, not the highway.

After hours of worn signs and bent fluorescent lights, we pulled away from the vast, filthy, urban megalopolis called Mexico City on a cool breezy evening. My body did not want to sleep, which would have been

the perfect thing to do in a bus laboring through the darkness. Everyone else was reclined in adequate comfort, and out for the night.

I could still make out the top of Christa's head, three rows up, weaving in perfect time with the other heads as the bus bumped and swerved. But I knew much more about her than the top of her head. I held her naked body for the first time in Acapulco's *Hotel Valencia* the previous fall. Holding her was one of those moments when I felt separated from my own body, and I knew I would remember that moment for the rest of my life. I watched myself kiss her, fondle her. She had rolls of tummy that she called her "pooncheh," which I explored along with the rest of her. Dwelling on these memories through the night had the twin effects of thrilling and sickening at the same time, like smoking clove cigarettes—an indulgence I learned from the local kids in my Mexico City neighborhood. I took a peek at Gustavo, one of those neighborhood kids, who decided to come along with us. He shared a seat with me. He was pure *chilango* (Mexico City resident)—big tummy, loud, with a liberal use of some form of *chingar* in his everything he said. He was the one I felt most at home with on this trip.

After a night of struggling to keep my imagination leashed, warm pastel skies opened over a flat dark horizon, giving my eyes something to latch onto, and a steady mooring for my mind.

The ache was born on December 14th, Friday, a little after three in the afternoon. The clouds in the sky were a tie-die gray. The air did not have a trace of breeze. I was wondering if the two of us might walk around Polanco looking at the windows, gazing at *pan dulce*. Maybe we would eat at the *Neveria Roxy* in La Condesa.

I would say "hola" to Raymundo as he served us Popocatepetls, and pretend, for a moment, that I could be like a Mexican. We did not do either of those things. Instead, she told me she wanted to be just friends. Some moments of my life cling to me like moles.

After the last exam, I took a bus up Mexico's west coast to Southern California. I wanted to be home for Christmas. I walked three miles from the bus station to my house at six in the morning. My mom was at the kitchen table having her coffee. She gave me a hug and we talked while waiting for everyone else to wake up. She asked me lots of questions and I was too tired to offer any resistance. I even told her about Christa. I had a backpack full of Mexican trinkets that I would use as gifts. After a week, I took a bus all the way back down to Mexico City where I met up with everyone else.

And so began the tour with Gustavo and the crazy American students. We were about to experience Yucatan attractions and misadventures that we would never want to repeat. The zombie relationship between Christa and I haunted our group, manipulating what everyone said and did at every moment. I gravitated to Gustavo. Yucatan was not going to be a fun trip with my girlfriend anymore. I tried to remember that I was supposed to be excited about Mayan ruins.

It was refreshing to escape the urban wilderness of Mexico City, with cars parked on the sidewalks, entire neighborhoods with no paved roads, and buses packed so tight that boys would hang out of the front and back doors as they sped along Reforma Avenue. In the Yucatan Peninsula we saw vast green sultry meadows, punctuated with scrubby trees and an occasional isolated hill. The green was dull—not bright or vivid. A vigorous green would be impossible with the sun

beating down so oppressively. No flowers—just pure heavy green. I saw no houses for miles. We were far from any populace in a peninsula that was home to so many ancient cities.

The Yucatan Peninsula had a lifetime supply of ruins. After hearing about them in our anthropology class, we were finally going to see them.

Uxmal

Fodor's Mexico, 1980 said:

Uxmal exemplifies the essential simplicity and uncluttered facades of the Puuc style. Yet basic to both and indeed to all Mayan architecture is the way every important building is raised on some sort of substructure, varying from inches to more than 100 feet in height, with the taller ones soaring in ziggurat stages to the temple at the top.



I thought the driver had made a mistake when we stepped out of the dark air conditioned bus into the bright heavy exterior. The clouds only served to increase the glare, at a moment in our lives when none of us had yet discovered sunglasses. A major Mayan ruin was supposed to be here? We walked into the bush through a narrow white dirt path. An old, but colorful ticket booth coincided with the broadening of the way. A dark, fat man in a T-shirt sat on a stool outside the booth. We took a chance that the booth and the man were both supposed to be there, and paid him 20 pesos each.

The dull green vegetation still predominated, as Mother Nature had long since taken back most of

what had been a city of an estimated 15,000. A steep, white pyramid, sticking out of the savanna like an alien spacecraft, pulled at us as we entered the main square of the ruins. It hurt my eyes to look at it. You don't see a white pyramid in the middle of such flatlands without wanting to climb it. The precipitous stairs seemed dangerous, but Gustavo grabbed a hanging chain and pulled his way up. The rest of us crawled. I kept my eyes on my own hands and feet and away from Christa, as our bodies worked to reach the top. Before, Christa and I would have walked everywhere together. At Uxmal, she could not stay close enough to Jolene and Liz.

Night fell and we stayed at the campground. One sleepless night does not mean getting more sleep the following night. One difference between this night and the previous one was the mosquitos, making me even more trapped than ever. A sleeping bag is a terrible place in which to spend a tropical night, but I had no other way to guard against being bitten. I also had to cover my ears because the mosquitos loved to buzz in that very spot. How did they know where my ears are? Did the Mayans endure these trials every night through the centuries? At least the mosquitos pushed Christa out of my head.

On the second day Bryan, Miles, Gustavo and I visited some other ruins that were heaps of rubble, and it was easier to appreciate the brutality of the centuries against what were once populated areas. Not even a ticket seller was around. The area's desolation slowed my pace. I noticed a simple stone column, long overrun with wild vegetation. Thin-leaved magueys and other brush clung to its sides. Crowning the top, a white skeleton of a tree stood, dead as the civilization that piled up those rocks.

Bryan and Miles rock-climbed to the top of a temple. I touched one of its walls, and gritty sand came off in my hand. I decided not to go up myself. I took photos instead. These ruins were different from the castles that my sister visited when she was travelling in Scotland. Those places were pristine compared with what we had in Mexico.

We followed Gustavo's lead for flagging down rides, holding out our hands. I had somehow forgotten all those childhood warnings about hitchhiking. I was a different person—someone who did not sleep, did not eat, and had little regard for personal safety. I still felt uncomfortable that Bryan always had to holler "pendejo!" when someone didn't pick us up.

The girls spent that day at Uxmal. When we returned we found them reading cheap novels at the campsite. That evening we took a bus to Merida.

Merida

Fodor's Mexico, 1980 said:

There are not many night clubs in Merida, and some of the better ones are in the hotels themselves. Some feature entertainment imported from Mexico City, but usually rely on local talent.



We had dinner together at a place where the walls were covered with polyester curtains. A stack of empty soda bottles in crates sat in the corner. The tables were too small to accommodate the plates and drinks we ordered. A small child came in and sang a song while whacking two pieces of wood together. Gustavo and I gave him some money.

After dinner we waited with a crowd at a busy intersection. A woman got pushed headlong into the traffic before the light changed. I heard her hand smack on the street as her bag fell from her shoulders. Oranges rolled across the pavement. A small red pickup was heading straight for her and a collective gasp gripped the onlookers. The driver of the truck slammed on his brakes, and the screech of the tires resonated across the two-story buildings that hemmed in the sidewalks. The truck stopped a few feet short of her. I was horrified. Bryan said, "She was just praying his brakes would work."

When we arrived at the hotel, I split off from the group to walk through the dark streets. Beggars and cripples. I would not know Mexico without them, and Merida was no exception. I saw one fellow who had no legs at all. He moved around on an old wooden dolly, inches from the ground. His shirt was the color of the street, as were his face, hair, and the hands he held out to everyone who passed. I gave him a pan dulce I had just bought. He put it in a shirt pocket as he rolled away. These things were not pleasant. Tourists avoid these kinds of things. But I was trying to forget. I was always trying to forget:

The way she laughed at my jokes.

The lilac smell of her hair.

How she waited for me to finish my drawing class on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The walking and clinging at the beach in Ixtapa.

When I returned to the hotel everyone was sprawled over two beds. Gustavo sat on the desk. The guys were drinking large bottles of Carta Blanca. The girls were looking at a book while holding a bottle of something clear. Jolene stood up as I came in.

"Okay, Garrett. You have to try this," she said, holding the bottle to me.

"I do?"

"Yes."

"What's in the bottle?" I asked, holding it up.

"Tequila."

I opened up the screw top and took a whiff. It stung like horseradish. I put the top back on.

"Okay," said Liz, referencing a book. "You take a hit of the bottle. Then you bite into the lime."

Jolene had some limes on the bed. She had a half lime in her hands and a small bowl of white stuff.

"What's in the bowl?" I asked.

"Salt," said Jolene.

I looked around at the guys with their beers. Gustavo took a swig of his bottle. I didn't think he was more than 17.

"Shouldn't I do this with a shot glass?"

"We don't have a shot glass."

I took another look at the bottle in my hands—"100 de Agave," it said. I did not see anything listing its alcoholic content.

"I'm ready," said Jolene, standing next to me, lime in one hand, bowl of salt in the other.

I sighed and reopened the bottle. I stretched out my right hand with the bottle in it. No cheering—just people looking at me. I looked at Christa and she looked down.

"Well, here goes."

"Don't breathe until you have bitten into the lime," said Liz, looking at her book.

I put the bottle's opening to my lips, tipped my head back and allowed more of its contents into my mouth than I intended. The sting threatened my nose and the back of my throat. I put the bottle on the desk. Jolene held the lime to my face, mounded with salt. It seemed like a lot of salt to me but I didn't have any time to think about it. I grabbed the lime out of Jolene's hand and bit down on it, spilling salt everywhere. I had not tasted so much salt since my first time getting rolled by a wave in the Pacific.

I swallowed and put the lime down. Teeth marks encircled the green skin. "I don't think that's the way you're supposed to do it," I said.

"Well—that's what it says here," said Liz.

"Get someone else next time."

Before, when Christa and I went on trips together, we would get our own place. Now, all seven of us shared a room. That night I leaned against the wall, read my tour book with my clunky flashlight, and waited for sleep to come (it didn't—again). I listened to the relaxed sound of the others sleeping.

I got to know the Yucatan very well that evening...



Fodor's Mexico, 1980:

Distinctive in appearance, dress, speech and manner, the Yucateco is often chunk-cheeked and round-eyed, similar in profile to the faces carved on the temples in the Mayan cities, shorter and sturdier than his paisanos to the west.



When light finally slipped into the room through the curtains, I got out and walked to "El Centro." It was delicious cool freedom. I saw retail stores, restaurants and bakeries that would be alive with people in a few hours. The street vendors would be selling tacos and tortas for the brave diner who would, with luck, not be on a bus the following day. Stands with large, five-gallon vats of drink would be available. And Christa would be the uncomfortable presence that I could not escape.

When I got back to the room Bryan accused me of leaving a log in the toilet. I denied it.

"Well—who the hell did it, then?"

"I don't know."

Playing the tourist, most of us went to museums. Bryan and Miles stayed at the hotel. We saw displays about the Mayans, their architecture, and their history.

Chichen Itza

Fodor's Mexico, 1980 said:

The best known, most extensively restored, and in some respects the most extraordinary of the ancient ruins, Chichen Itza is a jewel amongst the Mayan ruins.



We took the bus to Chichen Itza, one of the largest ancient Mayan cities of the Yucatan peninsula. It was supposed to be a two hour trip, but it turned into four hours with distressing ease. Not even Bryan complained, which I took as a sign that Mexico was wearing him down.

I had not seen so many people at ruins since Teotihuacan, with the chilangos from Mexico City. In Chichen Itza, Europeans were everywhere. Busloads of day trippers from Cancún clung to confident-looking tour guides. We laughed. We were arrogant Spanish-speaking student travelers. We knew the country while they knew only beach, snorkeling and breezy hotel rooms.

We met Russ, a man with dangling, pale-gray whiskers and a softness in his middle. He wore low-hanging khaki shorts, held up by a nylon rope. He spent his days reclined in a folding lawn chair. His sky blue Chevy pickup had a tarp-covered camper. He offered to sell us some "special mushrooms," and told us about nights of stray dogs fighting when any of the females went into heat.

We tried some of Russ' mushrooms that evening, but the girls refused. Christa was keeping her distance and Liz and Jolene were afraid (What? You don't trust illegal substances from a smelly stranger in the middle of a foreign country?).

I lost my legs and arms and I could not get up. The stars were soaring through thick black skies. Canis Major, which Russ had just shown me, took the shape of a galloping horse. Then it was a horse with a boy on top. The boy was lost and he did not know where his parents were and he was looking for them. The horse was not going where the boy wanted, but there was nothing he could do because he had never been on a horse before and the horse was his only friend. Then the stars were a pair of lovers separated by something big, powerful, and evil. Their desperation showed in how their contorted limbs stretched. I think I started crying. Then I saw a warrior. He was supposed to

commit suicide for his family and his honor but he was not sure he had the will to do it. He remained in the sky, forever vacillating.

It was first light when I woke. I was always awake at first light. My mouth was dry, but I had just had my first sleep in days. I was the only one up. Then I noticed the mosquito bites on the places where I did not have repellent. All of my body ached. I had been sleeping on rocks for hours. Then I saw Christa, asleep, and remembered my real ache.

I got up and walked around the grounds, quiet in the early morning. I walked by a park employee. He didn't seem to want me to bother him, and all I said was "hi." I saw a small hill behind a yellow-taped barrier. At part of its base, layers of dirt were dug away, showing stones, carefully positioned and freshly mortared. In a flash, I figured out what had happened. This hill was covering an ancient temple, and someone was trying dig it up and rebuild it. And those stones—were they all part of the original structure? Were any of them part of the original structure? I took a picture, and wondered how much of Chichen Itza was real.

When I got back, the others were waking up. Miles and Bryan were telling everyone that they had snuck over to the older ruins the previous evening. I dismissed my indignation that they did not invite me. They said they climbed a temple, and then noticed a couple of men heading towards them in the moonlight, drifting like ghosts.

Miles and Bryan relived their stupor-stricken misadventure for us.

"Miles."

"What?"

"There's two guys coming this way."

"Oh shit!"

The men continued to advance across the grounds.

"Miles."

"What?"

"I think they're guards."

"Oh shit!"

The guards were getting closer.

"Miles."

"What?"

"I think they have guns."

"Oh shit!"

Miles and Bryan did not know what to do.

"Miles."

"What?"

"I'm gonna run for it."

"Oh shit!"

Bryan slid down the side of the temple away from the advancing men, and then ran straight into the brush, with Miles right at his heels. We were all laughing and horrified.

In the following days we visited the ruins of Cobá, and then Tulum. I gazed at the sky-blue Caribbean (The California Pacific could never match this color) as we bused down to Xel-Ha, a place where we could go snorkeling. If I had known about half of the things down in those waters I would have been much more excited

than I already was. We checked our things and rented snorkeling gear. They didn't even ask if we could swim, although I do seem to remember signing some waiver. That was Mexico.

Xel-Ha was like my swimming pool back at home, lukewarm and clear, but bigger and more interesting. I did not know that the fish would be so colorful and tame. I sunk in the water until my ears felt pressure. I could have touched coral and the sea fans and the little plants that closed up when I passed too close. I saw Miles and Bryan, swimming together at the surface, apparently unable to get down to where the action was.

Liz and Jolene went in but Christa did not. She waited at the cabanas, reading a book. I was the last to get out of the water. I had finally made up my mind about what I was doing next. "I'm going to Guatemala," I said. Looks ranging from indifference to horror surrounded me.

We left the park and waited by the road. The girls were excited about taking the bus north to Cancún. I saw a lone car coming southbound. This would be my chance. I crossed the road and held up my hand. The car passed me and I heard laughter. I stayed where I was and set my backpack down.

Gustavo crossed the street and approached me. "Garrett. You should not go Guatemala. It has war. It has danger. You should not go." He lingered, looking into my face. Then he went back to the others. Christa did not look at me.

A pickup appeared in the north. I stood up and let my backpack fall where it was. I held up my hand and watched as it slowed down. It was one of those moments when I was feeling separated from my body—one of those moments I would remember for the rest

of my life. I could see myself throwing my backpack into the truck's bed before climbing in. I pulled myself forward and leaned my head against the cab, looking backwards. I waved. The others looked at me, not waving. The truck revved, pulled back onto the road and accelerated. My companions were getting smaller. The truck was accelerating down a straight highway. In the fading light of dusk, my companions disappeared. I was alone, taking a ride with someone I did not know, going to a strange place. I was thrilled and terrified. I was free like never before, and perhaps never again.

Dusk eased into night as the truck sped on, and I was thinking about the border. The next day, I would be in a new country.

The ache was still awful and ugly. But I was outside of myself and the ache was inside me, in a cage.

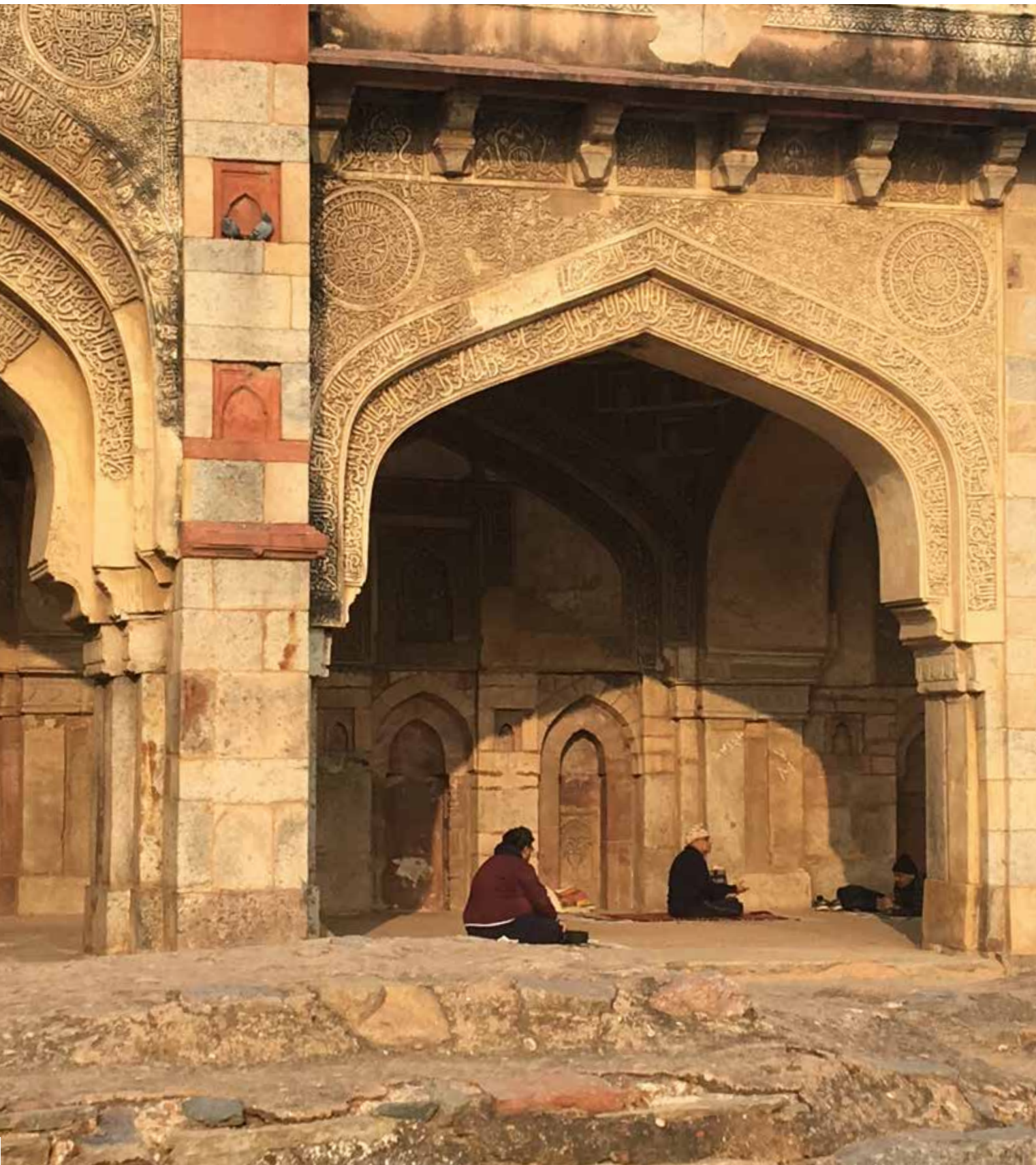
I stuck my tongue out at it.



Fodor's Mexico, 1980:

The border is impressive for its remoteness and the irritations of getting across. It is best to have a passport, multiple-entry Mexican tourist card, Guatemalan tourist card, smallpox vaccination certificate, and all the other paraphernalia required for international travel.





ABOVE: Image 5, Hindu Prayers on a Muslim Holy Day

Delhi at Dawn, Berlin at Dusk

Rebecca Ruth Gould



Rebecca Ruth Gould is the author of the poetry collection *Cityscapes* (Alien Buddha Press, 2019) and the award-winning monograph *Writers & Rebels* (Yale University Press). She has translated many books from Persian and Georgian, including *After Tomorrow the Days Disappear: Ghazals and Other Poems of Hasan Sijzi of Delhi* (Northwestern University Press, 2016) and *The Death of Bagrat Zakharych and other Stories* by Vazha-Pshavela (Paper & Ink, 2019). A Pushcart Prize nominee, she was a finalist for the Luminaire Award for Best Poetry (2017) and for Lunch Ticket's Gabo Prize (2017).

15 March 2019. My second visit to Delhi. I left my room at six in the morning, taking advantage of the dawn, and headed for Lodhi Gardens, a mausoleum complex built in 1444 by the Lodhi ruler Alam Shah. The Lodhis were a succession of Afghan kings from 1451 to 1526 and the last dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate, the most important Islamic empire in South Asia prior to the Mughals. The Delhi Sultanate comprised five separate dynasties and ruled from Delhi for three hundred and twenty years. The Lodhis created Delhi as a Muslim city a few decades before Mughal rulers changed the face of Indian Islam, making it more Indic and more vernacular. The gardens that were named after this dynasty only in 1947, after Indian independence, are arguably their most spectacular achievement.

Wandering through Delhi at dawn, I witnessed Lodhi Gardens as I never had before. They are intimately integrated into Delhi's urban landscape; the garden's walkways and bypasses feature in the everyday lives of its inhabitants. At the same time, the mosques, tombs, and footpaths of these gardens are more remote—more transcendent—than New York City's Central Park, Berlin's Tiergarten, and Paris's Jardin du Luxembourg.

Later that month, I found myself lost near Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. I had just visited the Topography of Terror. This harrowing museum documents the emergence of the Third Reich in Berlin. After I finished touring the exhibit, I decided to walk back to my hotel. As soon as I reached Potsdamer Platz, I became overwhelmed by the height of the buildings that pierced the blue-speckled sky. Although the square dates back to the seventeenth century, the light that slanted in from the sky reminded me of New York City in the 1950s. The black streaks in the clouds reminded me of mortality, conjuring memories of lives filled



LEFT: *Image 4, Awakening World*

THIS PAGE: *Image 10, Potsdamer Skyscraper*





with light yet surrounded by blackness. While walking through Berlin as dusk became night, I witnessed a city struggling with the forces of nature, and trying to domesticate it. This domestication appeared a necessary part of coming to terms with the mass genocide that had been perpetrated on these streets several decades earlier. Nature was invited in, but only at the cost of sacrificing its wildness, of being tamed by urban parks like the Tiergarten, and along the Spree.

While nature had to be tamed in order to enter into Berlin's cityscape, Lodhi Gardens presents a different kind of symbiosis between wilderness and the built environment. The mosques and tombs in Lodhi Gardens have retained an ancient relation to the earth. Locals gather near them to meditate and pray. The monuments do not battle against the world. They may be indifferent, but they do not intimidate. Like many of Delhi's ruins, they are in certain respects forgotten. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they are not fetishized, not elevated to the status of a tourist attraction. Lodhi Gardens is a space for oblivion, right in the heart of the city. The skyscrapers of Potsdamer Platz offer no such relief. Instead of transporting the viewer to another world, they force the viewer to confront the cityscape amid all the detritus of urban life, amid dark memories of genocide, and near a polluted transportation hub. Although Delhi is best known these days for its smog, the layers of dust that have caused fatalities elsewhere in the city have magically eluded the gardens.

While Berlin's harsh cityscape, crowned by a turquoise sky, is a necessary reminder of the brutality of the twentieth century, Lodhi Gardens reminds us of the transitoriness of earthly existence alongside the permanence of eternity during these same violent years. Its otherworldly atmosphere is best captured in

Image 1, Bara Gumbad Mosque



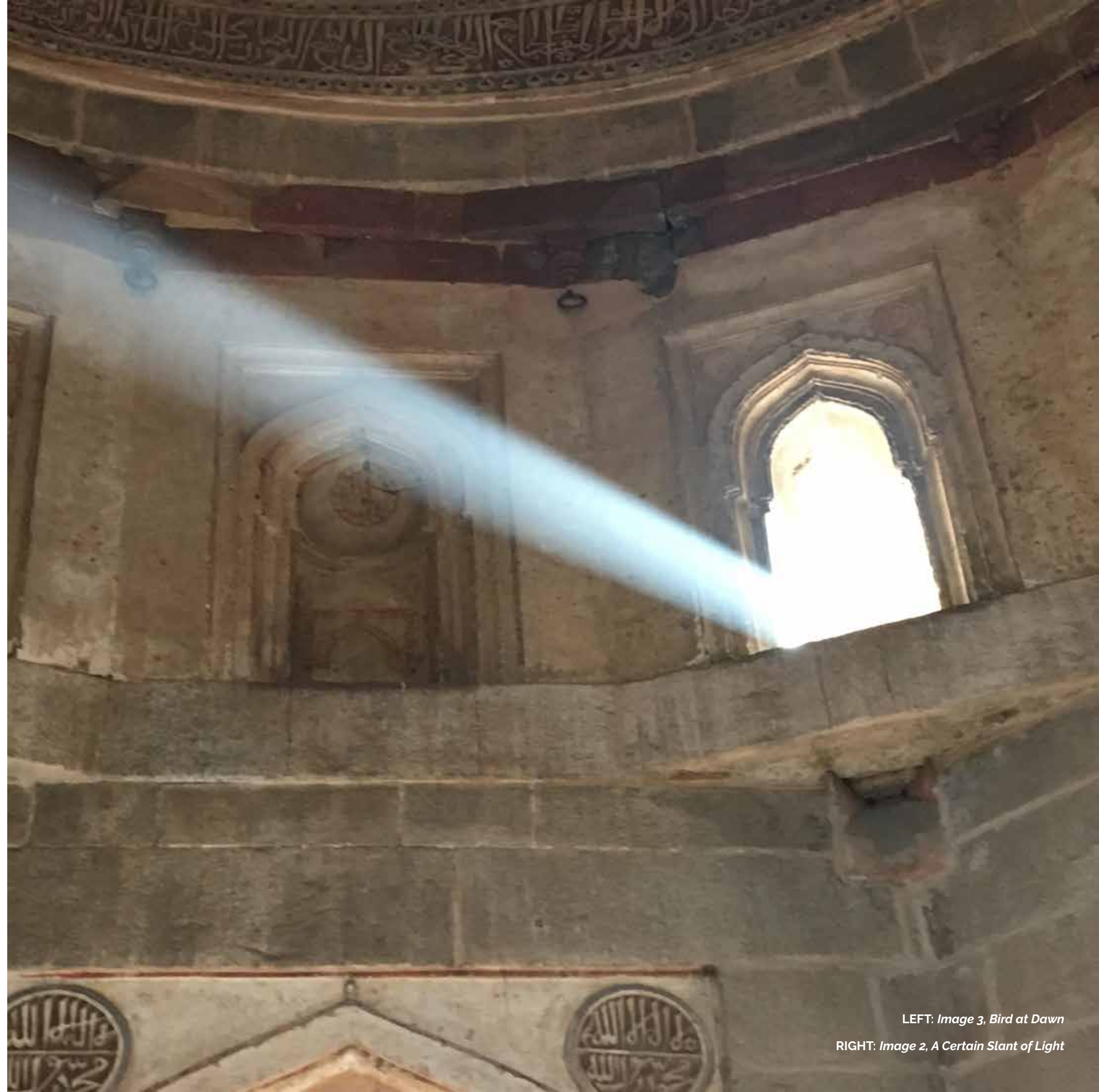
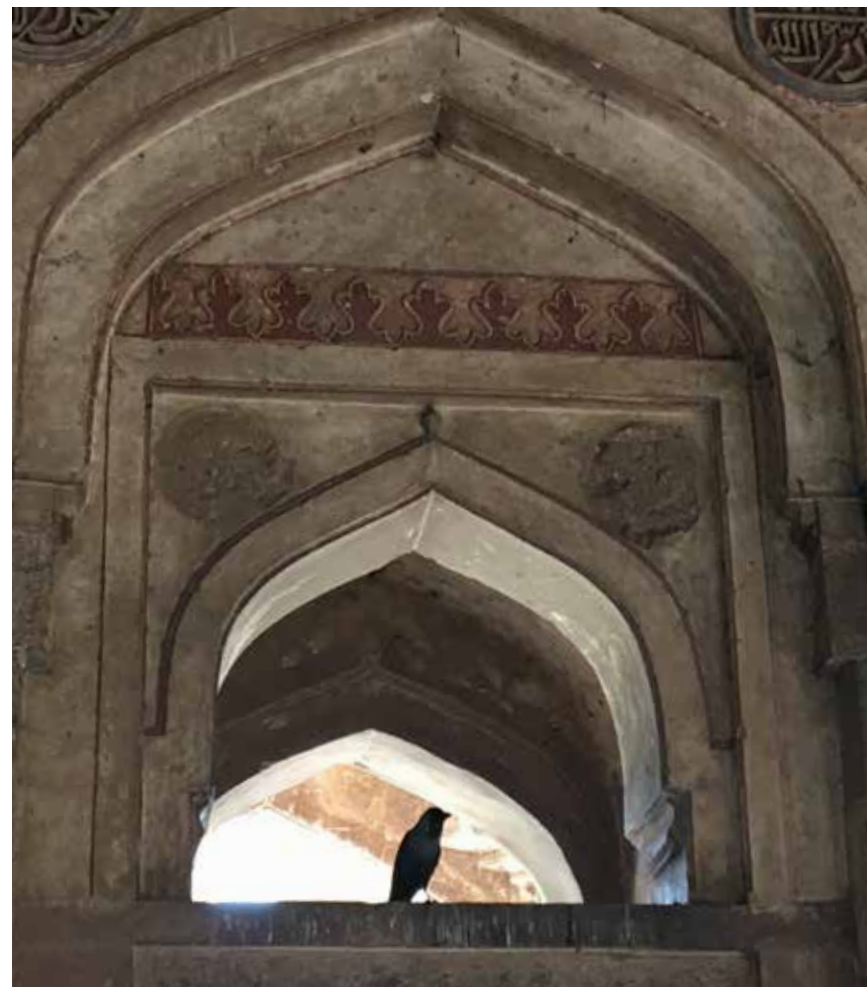
LEFT: Image 6, Potsdamer Platz Station

THIS PAGE: Image 9, Blue Sky and Three Buildings

the words of Mexican poet Octavio Paz. In a poem entitled "In the Lodhi Gardens," Paz, who served as Mexico's ambassador to India from 1962-1968, evokes his visit in terms that partly resonate with images 3 and 4:

Into the unanimous blue
of the mausoleum domes
—black, thick, pensive—
birds suddenly
flew.

Paz's imagery notwithstanding, there was no blue that dawn in Delhi. Since Paz penned his homage to Lodhi Gardens half a century ago, Delhi's cityscape has changed. Lodhi Gardens that morning radiated various shades of red: carnelian, cerise, claret, crimson, and vermillion. The deepest shades of blue were to be found, not in Delhi's sky, but in faraway Berlin. The images from Berlin juxtaposed here bring together the two worlds evoked in Paz's poems: Berlin as an archetype of industrialized modernity, and Delhi as an archetype of a modernity that offers a different take on the time of the modern and a different memory of the twentieth century.



LEFT: Image 3, *Bird at Dawn*

RIGHT: Image 2, *A Certain Slant of Light*

The paths shown in these pictures are desire lines, created by people walking the same route over and over again, wearing away the grass and soil. The photos were taken in Nottingham, England, at the Eastland Island, a 'wasteland' that was once a site of industry and has since become an informal space in the city, used by dog walkers, day-time drinkers, and people in need of a short cut. It has also become home for flora and fauna, including rare bee orchids. The site's future remains uncertain, but it is likely to be developed for housing and office spaces.

R o o t s / R o u t e s



Weaving desire lines both actual and fictional, the pieces in our Roots/Routes section explore city streets, urban trees, nostalgia, and hope: as well as highlighting some important issues.

In *The Lime Tree* by Veronika Opatřilová, the death of a lime tree and the sale of an old factory offer its last surviving owners both a route out of the past, and a chance to find their roots. In Matt McGee's short story we meet an L.A. ficus tree clinging to life at the edge of the freeway. Priscilla Long's journal of 17 walks in Seattle reveals the cultural and natural history of the city, including the many green spaces where trees still thrive.

Sarah Simon's photo, "En mi cuerpo decido yo," depicts a sidewalk tree being used as a platform to raise awareness of femicide and the rights of women to control their own bodies. Meanwhile, Jessi Eoin's illustration highlights the challenges facing disabled people when it comes to accessing urban nature: a path through a city park becomes an obstacle course when viewed from the perspective of someone with a mobility disability. And we have a poem from Yvonne in which a West Philly sidewalk tree offers a chance to reflect on the changing seasons of the year and of a life.

We're also excited to bring you a multimedia piece in this section. Here, you'll find stills, quotes, and a background essay on Samaré Gozal's video *Audacity*, which depicts a tree in Prague that has grown in the middle of an asphalt path and asks: *how did it get there?* Then head over to our website to watch the full video!

The Lime Tree

Veronika Opatřilová



Born in a small town in the Czech Republic and influenced by too much reading of Scandinavian literature, Veronika soon decided to become a writer and live on an island. After working as a Stockholm guide for years, she now works as a freelance writer and translator. You can find her work at majawriter.tumblr.com/



The dream about the lime tree returned tonight.

Mirka called a few days ago, so it was only a matter of time. She said someone had bought the factory. She actually said the name of the buyer, but for me it's just Someone. It makes no difference if I remember their name.

I haven't been there for three years. She said: Would you like to come for the last time?

I said: What would that change?

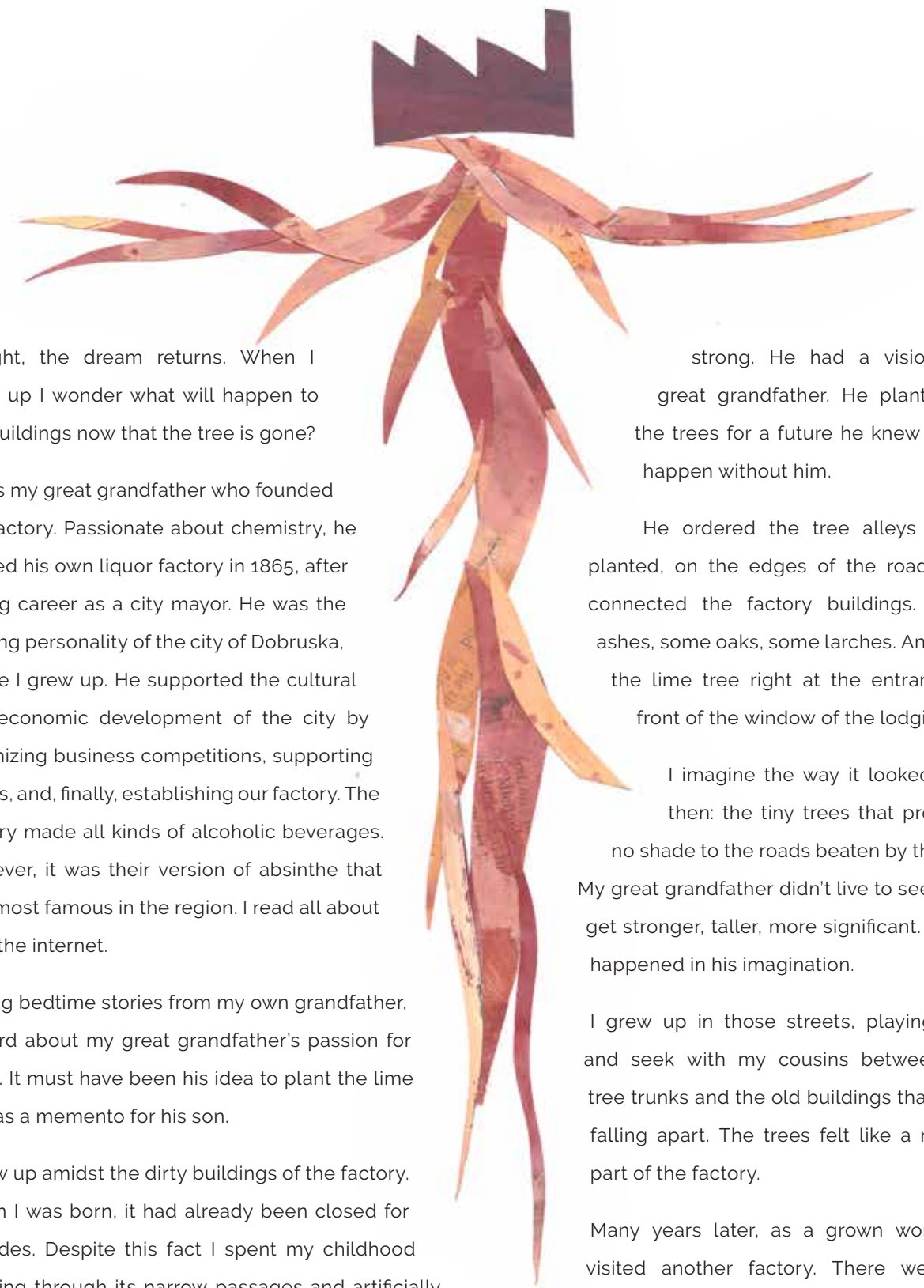
And she answered: Nothing. I just thought you would like to see it.

And then she said, incidentally, as if it was of no importance at all: They cut down the lime tree.

I still remember the first night I dreamt about the lime tree. I was sleeping in the main building of the factory, where the whole family used to sleep. Those simple beds were still there, as well as the cupboards full of unused clothes and that massive wooden table in the middle of the room.

That night I dreamt about the lime tree. About its roots. They were growing through the concrete, deep down into the ground, spreading underneath the whole factory. In my dream, it was the roots that supported the buildings, taking care of it. Our old factory was resting upon the unseen lime roots.

My great grandparents planted the tree when their first son, my grandfather, was born. It was meant to be his tree, to age with him, grow taller, stronger. But while my grandfather died, the tree didn't. At the age of seventy six it was just at the beginning of its journey. That's how it is with trees.



Tonight, the dream returns. When I wake up I wonder what will happen to the buildings now that the tree is gone?

It was my great grandfather who founded the factory. Passionate about chemistry, he started his own liquor factory in 1865, after a long career as a city mayor. He was the leading personality of the city of Dobruska, where I grew up. He supported the cultural and economic development of the city by organizing business competitions, supporting artists, and, finally, establishing our factory. The factory made all kinds of alcoholic beverages. However, it was their version of absinthe that was most famous in the region. I read all about it on the internet.

During bedtime stories from my own grandfather, I heard about my great grandfather's passion for trees. It must have been his idea to plant the lime tree as a memento for his son.

I grew up amidst the dirty buildings of the factory. When I was born, it had already been closed for decades. Despite this fact I spent my childhood strolling through its narrow passages and artificially built-up streets that connected the individual buildings. This was my city.

In the beginning the factor workers planted trees all around the factory. Small, insignificant trees with thin, vulnerable trunks, so easily bent when the wind blew

strong. He had a vision, my great grandfather. He planted all the trees for a future he knew would happen without him.

He ordered the tree alleys to be planted, on the edges of the roads that connected the factory buildings. Some ashes, some oaks, some larches. And then the lime tree right at the entrance, in front of the window of the lodgings.

I imagine the way it looked back then: the tiny trees that provided no shade to the roads beaten by the sun. My great grandfather didn't live to see them get stronger, taller, more significant. It only happened in his imagination.

I grew up in those streets, playing hide and seek with my cousins between the tree trunks and the old buildings that were falling apart. The trees felt like a natural part of the factory.

Many years later, as a grown woman, I visited another factory. There were no trees, no branches, no green, and no roots underneath my feet. Until that moment I was sure that factories and trees naturally belonged together. I didn't know that it was the visionary nature of my great grandfather that connected these two seemingly unrelated worlds.

The steel and the leaves. The concrete and the wood.
The routes and the roots.

Now it's just me and Mirka. No one else. The two of us
and our abandoned factory.

"I cannot take care of it," she said. "And since you have
no money..." She was implying what I had already been
suspecting.

For as long as I can remember the old liquor factory was
the place where our family met to celebrate birthdays,
anniversaries, childbirths, and deaths. It was there,
hidden behind the tallest trees in the neighborhood,
among the rusted pipes, where I had my fairytale
childhood. Our childish screams, our dangerous games
among the broken machines, I remember it all.

How could I know, as a child, that the roots of the trees
were slowly but persistently growing underneath our
scuttling baby feet, creating their own underground
world, so closely connected with the one above? Where
the foundations of the grey buildings were embedded,
so too were the roots of my great grandfather's trees.
What we couldn't see was the very essence of the
place. The very soul of it.

Mirka said I can come and say goodbye. I asked her:
What will happen next?

She didn't know, she didn't care: Maybe a spa complex,
maybe a parking spot, what do I know?

There is no need to be sentimental, she added. We had
our share in the story, it's time to move on.

And then, at the very end of our call, as if it was of no
importance at all, she said: They cut down the lime tree.

But I felt it. The slightly withheld breath, the pause, the
silence before she said: See you there then.

She knows it too. It's over.

I arrive in the evening. After a five-hour drive from the
city I randomly chose to live in.

I still have the keys for the green factory gate, though
there is no need to lock the premises. There are holes
in the fence. Local teens found their way inside my
childhood paradise, left empty cans, cigarette butts,
and broken vodka bottles on the overgrown streets.
The concrete has cracked, providing space for the
roots to come up. I read somewhere that one should
not step on tree roots, it hurts the trees, the article
claimed. They are very sensitive. I carefully park the car
in an empty spot close to the gate.

I am looking at the decay. I didn't know it had got so
bad: broken windows, graffiti on the walls, moldy things
in cupboards, machines stolen, glass everywhere. The
bramble bushes have started to invade the rooms, their
thorny branches creeping up the walls and in through
the holes and open windows. It's hard to remember
where the roads lead, where the doors are, where we
kept the bicycles, where my grandmother used to sit
underneath the lime tree branches. She used to hide
under them in their cold darkness because she hated
the sun. It was her own private cave.

There are no branches now. There is no lime tree. I look
at the stump they left here. The ground around it is still
covered in sawdust. The stump looks at me accusingly,
like a severed neck.

I once read in an article that the head is still capable
of perceiving reality even when it's not connected to
the rest of the body. But where is the head of my great
grandfather's lime tree now? Or is it the other way round
where trees are concerned? Are the roots the brain
and the stump I am looking at still alive, still seeing me

crying over it, perplexed over its lost body? Can it grow
again, even if a vital part of it was amputated?

Can I?

Mirka arrives a few hours after me. We find our way
inside, to our room, and to our amazement the table
is still there, in the middle, just a little bit shaky and
covered in dust.

We drink red wine, sitting on plastic chairs that someone
probably brought here and forgot about them. Or
will they come back, anytime, creep from behind the
shadows, attack us and kill us, take our money and
burn down our cars, the whole factory and our lifeless
bodies?

She talks about money. The factory is worth a lot. What
will I do with the money, once it's sold, she wants to
know.

I don't know how to answer. I have no stable home, no
children to support, no family, only her.

She will travel, finally. She drinks fast, laughs
hysterically, as she always did, blinking too much and
fixing her hair constantly.

I am looking at the crooked tree shapes through the
broken windows. Now, at night, their shapes look like
people. They look captivated, stuck forever in one
place and in a different perception of time. They are
staring at us, with no words to tell their stories.

I shudder.

"I want to root somewhere," I say finally, after a long
silence. "Plant trees and never see them grow old."

She looks at me without a word; in the darkness I cannot
distinguish her eyes.





“En mi cuerpo decido yo”

Sarah Simon



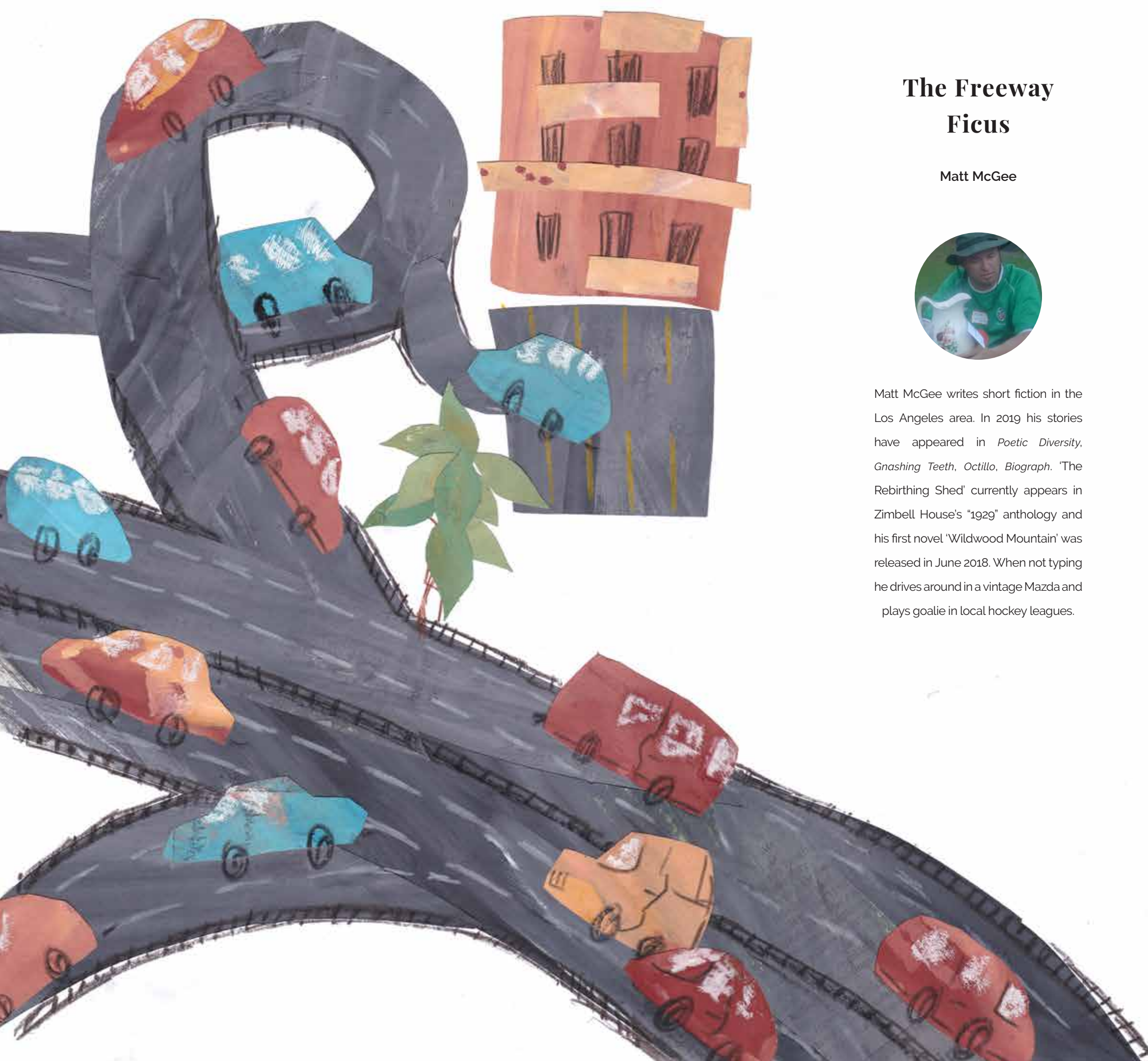
Sarah is a New Yorker at soul, living and teaching English between Ecuador and Uruguay. In 2019, she will be publishing her first poetry book, “core collection: poems about eating disorders”, with Adelaide Books.

“En mi cuerpo decido yo”: I am the one who decides on my body. What does this mean to you?

I ran into this cardboard pasted to a tree after it rained in the sleepy fishing town of Fray Bentos, Uruguay. It was late March, a week or two following El Día Mundial de la Mujer, or International Women's Day. In Latin America, you'll hear about the hashtag #NiUnaMenos, which calls attention to women's rights, particularly machista violence against women in the form of femicide.

That's the background information. Regarding the photo, why I took it, and why I took it this way:

I first saw it from the side, withered and bent by humidity. But I didn't have to straighten it out or stand straight in front of it to know what it meant; we should all educate ourselves enough about gender violence to be able to recognize it from multiple sides. And there the cardboard sign hung on the tree for weeks: a sociopolitical movement that garners much attention in urban environments but that still appeared in this small town with more trees than people.



The Freeway Ficus

Matt McGee



Matt McGee writes short fiction in the Los Angeles area. In 2019 his stories have appeared in *Poetic Diversity*, *Gnashing Teeth*, *Octillo*, *Biograph*. 'The Rebirthing Shed' currently appears in Zimbell House's "1929" anthology and his first novel 'Wildwood Mountain' was released in June 2018. When not typing he drives around in a vintage Mazda and plays goalie in local hockey leagues.

Andrew's first Los Angeles apartment overlooked the freeway. "You think they'd dock the rent because of the constant noise," he told his father on the phone. "The tires and the horns and the road rage. Hey, don't tell Mom."

"I won't."

"She'd worry."

"And I'm not? You kept up all night by traffic and carbon monoxide. Why didn't you just move to hell?"

"The rent was even higher there. Besides, it's not that bad," Andrew said. "But you think they'd cut me a little break on the price. The manager says 'that is part of the charm. You like, you pay.' Then he pointed at the on-ramp, Dad, right at the end of our parking lot. And I was hooked."

"By an on-ramp?"

"Some people go for curb appeal. I prefer convenience."

It was true. All Andrew had to do was make a quick left turn into traffic every morning. It was like having a boat slip closest to the lake.

There were twelve available units. The third floor unit seemed best. Sure, more stairs to climb, but no neighbors dancing overhead at 4 am. Top of the food chain.

Andrew, like generations of humans before him, had come to LA fresh out of college, with a major in writing and a minor in acting. He'd graduated from one ramen noodle existence to the next, and from his third floor perch he could wage the good fight to be noticed. He'd succeeded in convincing teachers of his mission, the scholarship committee who gave him money, the

parents who saw his grades and gave him more money to sustain him on his way to greatness.

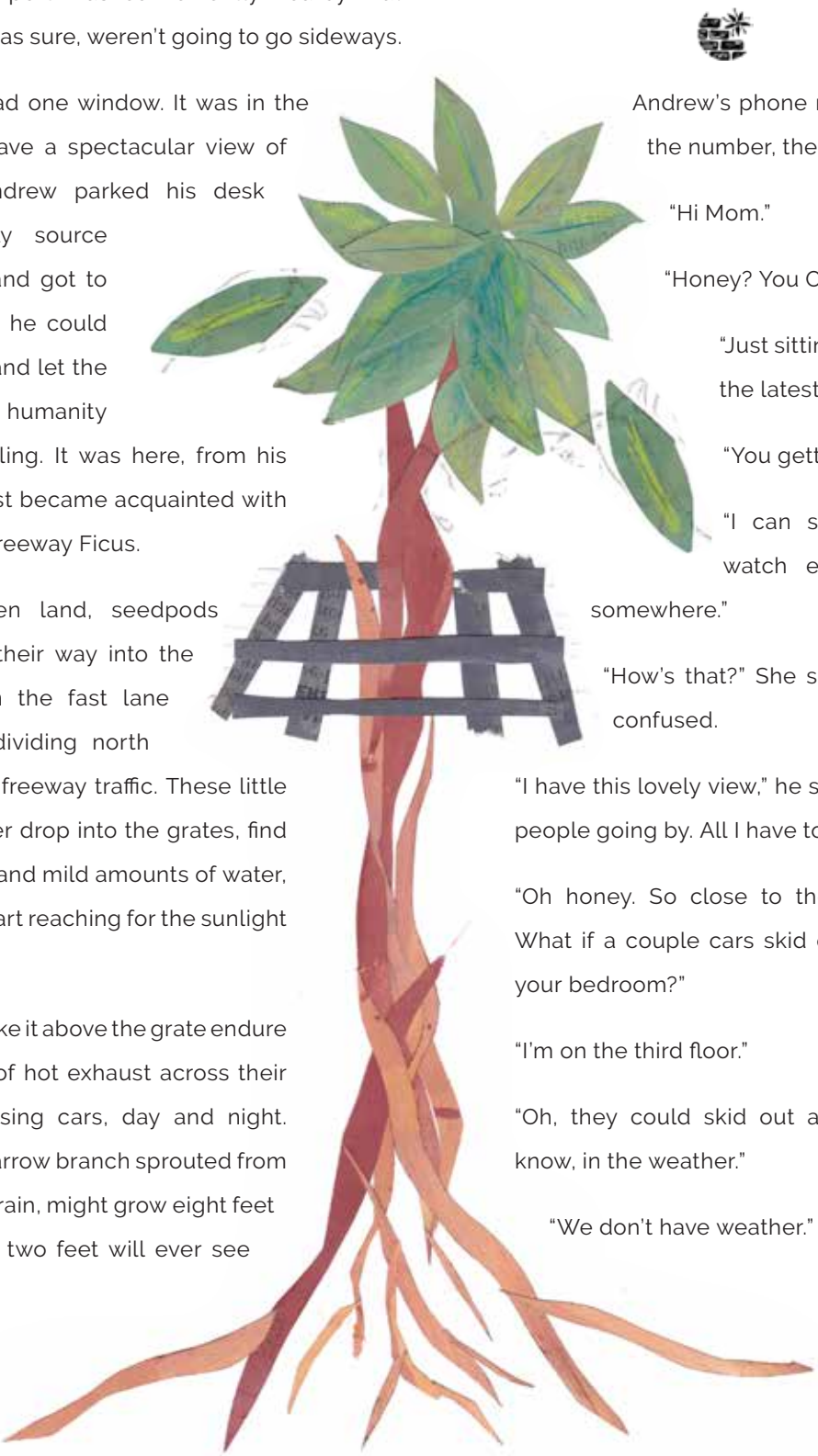
Locals call the place he landed in 'Apartment Row'—a two mile stretch of the 405 Freeway, lined on both sides with new, high-density housing. It seemed as fertile a place as any to get started. And if things went sideways, the airport was conveniently nearby. But things, Andrew was sure, weren't going to go sideways.

His apartment had one window. It was in the bedroom, and gave a spectacular view of the freeway. Andrew parked his desk beside the only source of natural light and got to work. He figured he could sit there all day and let the passing river of humanity feed his storytelling. It was here, from his perch, that he first became acquainted with the indigenous Freeway Ficus.

Starved for open land, seedpods sometimes find their way into the gutters between the fast lane and the K-rail dividing north and southbound freeway traffic. These little kernels of wonder drop into the grates, find rich black waste and mild amounts of water, take root, then start reaching for the sunlight six feet up.

The ones that make it above the grate endure a constant rush of hot exhaust across their leaves from passing cars, day and night. Their bodies, a narrow branch sprouted from the steel storm drain, might grow eight feet tall, though only two feet will ever see

sunlight. All it takes is one blowout, one overheated engine, one bumper-to-bumper tap that Southern Californians love to shout and sue over, and when those drivers elect to pull into the center emergency lane rather than the safer right-side shoulder, whack, the struggle of the ficus is over and nature has to start all over again.



Andrew's phone rang. He looked at the number, then picked up.

"Hi Mom."

"Honey? You OK out there?"

"Just sitting here working on the latest masterpiece."

"You getting out enough?"

"I can sit right here and watch everyone else go somewhere."

"How's that?" She sounded genuinely confused.

"I have this lovely view," he soft-sold. "So many people going by. All I have to do is watch."

"Oh honey. So close to the highway? Why? What if a couple cars skid out and end up in your bedroom?"

"I'm on the third floor."

"Oh, they could skid out and go flying. You know, in the weather."

"We don't have weather."

"But..." She went on, and Andrew stopped listening. She'd earned her right to worry. The sun had gone down. Traffic was moving outside. He watched the ficus wave in the eternal daylight of passing headlights.

"...I just worry about you getting enough sun..."

"Hard to avoid in LA. But I tell you what, I'll take a walk tomorrow down to the secondhand store. I've been getting a lot of good clothes down there."

"Oh honey, can't you buy new?"

"I majored in acting, Mom."

"And you're 'suffering for your art' I suppose. Well, enjoy these years. Someday you'll look back on them fondly. You're going to be a big success. I just know it."

And that was it. That's all anyone needs. Knowing he could call anytime, day or night, and get that same, glowing love, that was all he needed.

Andrew would sit and watch traffic for hours. Whereas most drivers were resigned to the slow pace, occasionally a 'rabbit' would dodge lane to lane, causing horns to honk, lights to flash, and wheels to jerk and weave. Lucky for the Freeway Ficus this mostly happened in the slow lanes.

The February downpours coincided with his first screenwriting offer. He sat thinking it over, making notes, watching a river of rainwater overload the circuitry of the ficus's drain grate. A flooded fast lane meant spin-outs, a real-life Hollywood stunt show for him to watch. Pop-eyed drivers would frantically spin their wheels to regain the control they'd been lulled into thinking was a permanent way of life. When the season ended without incident, Andrew imagined the tree would grow big and strong.

He never got the chance to see first hand. The gig he'd signed on for wasn't much, but it led to something else that led to something that paid great. Before the end of the year he'd move out of Apartment Row to the San Fernando Valley. There, trees grew safely in every yard, including his newly-purchased patch of ground.

"This is quite a nice little lot you have," his mother said on her first visit. "Of course I don't know what to compare it to. I've never been to California before."

"It's a great spot. Believe me."

"Quiet here."

"It is."

"And yet a brush fire or earthquake could strike any moment."

"We'd know."

"How would you know?"

"Brush fire? Smoke would be coming overhead. Earthquake? The dogs all bark."

"You can't pin your safety on a dog barking."

"People do it all the time back in Nebraska."

"Those are guard dogs. I've seen the dogs you have out here. I wouldn't stake my life on Mimi's pet poodle."

"I don't know anyone named Mimi, and in all my time in LA I haven't seen one pet poodle. I do see where I get my imagination from, though."

"All I'm saying is one of these things could strike you dead any moment and you'd never have a chance to make a run for it."

Andrew sighed. "I would say 'don't worry.' But if there's one thing I've learned, it's that never in the history of

not worrying has anyone not worried after being told 'don't worry.'

"You got that right." She looked around the yard. "So many trees," she said. Her fingers were wrapped around her hot tea, which he'd served in a coffee mug swiped from Paramount's office.

"Yeah, lot of trees out here."

"Was your other place like this?"

"What other place?"

"The one on the third floor. Did you have many trees?"

"Just one," Andrew mumbled.

"Did it throw much shade?"

"No," he said. "Hopefully it's still there."

"What a shame. At least now, here you are. All this room. All these trees."

"Yep. Luckily, people aren't stuck wherever they root in."

"That's true," his mother said. "Still, never forget where you came from. Who guided you along."

The next afternoon, on their race back to LAX, past Apartment Row, he saw the Freeway Ficus wave in the breeze of his Toyota as they did a miraculous forty miles per hour.

"What?" his mother said.

"Hmm?"

"You were looking at something in your rearview mirror. There a cop back there?"

"No, no. Just..." He didn't know how to end his sentence. "Thought I saw an old friend."

Minutes after he'd seen her off with a wave at TSA, Andrew felt a strange, lonely pang and a need for roots. On his way home, he watched Apartment Row come in sight. From the northbound side, he watched the Freeway Ficus wave in the constant, southbound breeze. When he got home, he pulled up to his desk and wrote his next scene. A few minutes before ten o'clock, he rang his friend John.

"Jesus man, it's almost ten o'clock!"

"You're an actor. You're avoiding reading a new script or cruising Backstage West."

"Nothing says I can't do both. What's up?"

"Well, speaking of roles..." Andrew laid out the scene. He could tell that by the time he was done John wasn't convinced.

There was only one pitch left to make.

"It's a paying gig," Andrew said.



The following afternoon, the duo rented a one ton work truck from a local rental yard. The clerk threw in a long pry bar and four shovels. John called two more actor friends. He handed everyone reflective vests.

"From the costume department," John said.

Around 11 pm, the four men parked on the center shoulder of the 405 and surrounded the truck with orange cones swiped from the Ralph's grocery loading dock. Armed with the steel pole, shovels, and by moving quick, quick, quick, the foursome worked in the amber glow of the truck's flashing emergency lights, another gift from Paramount's prop department.

They pried up the drain gate, then dug the Freeway Ficus from its nest of roadside sludge. They set the tree in a wood box, dropped the grate back in place and sped off before the California Highway Patrol could come by.

"How about that park over on Lankershim, by the 170?"

Everyone had Gatorades in hand at that point. It was Omar, cast as Highway Worker #2 who was making suggestions. His wasn't supposed to be a speaking part, but he'd been in 'Showboat' and was built for the role.

"Actually, I was thinking..."

"How about the park by your house," Matthew suggested. His was also a non-speaking role but he'd been an Axe Body Spray model. Had he worn only the reflective vest he'd have been causing multi-car pile-ups.

"I was thinking somewhere closer," Andrew said finally.

An hour later the foursome unloaded the tree from the back of the truck and carried it to an open spot in Andrew's side yard. A neighbor, Karen, appeared, tea mug in hand, the other arm holding her robe. She seemed to be enjoying the show, maybe just the view of Matthew's biceps.

"Doing a little late digging?"

"Never too late to be surrounded by friends," Andrew said.

Karen screwed up her brow. It meant she was thinking.

"What kind of tree is that?"

"Freeway Ficus."

Omar and John laughed. They finished the hole, planted their shovels and set the tree in its new home. Real Valley dirt was pushed onto its roots. Andrew retrieved the garden hose for its first good soaking.

"Yep," Omar said. "Rare anywhere else in the country. Hard to come by even out here. You see them all the time but not many survive."

"Blight?"

"Reckless drivers."

Karen wasn't buying. She shook her head and turned back to her house. She might've muttered oh, you boys as she went.

Omar and Andrew finished packing clean soil onto the ficus's roots. They'd made \$100 each for two hours acting work.

Three years later, the tree had grown to be part of the yard, blending with the pepper trees and eucalyptus that the railroad companies had introduced 150 years earlier.

And Andrew's brilliant career wasn't be the first cut short by collisions of egos and on-location bickering. Nor was his house the first sold after a brilliant career became a gratefully accepted community college teaching job.

But he still drives by the house, checks the backyard and the now towering tree. Andrew marvels at the Freeway Ficus. Unlike Omar and Matthew, who have long since moved back to their hometowns, the tree remains a friend from long ago that has found a way to thrive in a hostile land.

Audacity:
a film

Directed by **Samaré Gozal**
Produced by **Ramz Media**
www.ramzprod.com



Samaré is an Iranian-born Swedish film maker. Although she is interested in all aspects of film making, she has primarily worked as a director and producer in Ramz since 2005. Samaré holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Lund in Sweden. After receiving her MA, she started her film studies at the European Film College in Denmark. Since leaving film school she has been working on a variety of film projects internationally and she is currently living in Prague, Czech Republic, where she is primarily focusing on script and writing. Samaré recently also finished a short hand-drawn animation, inspired by the ongoing migration waves in Europe.



ABOVE: *Extreme long shot of the tree*

NEXT PAGE, LEFT: *Medium shot of the tree*

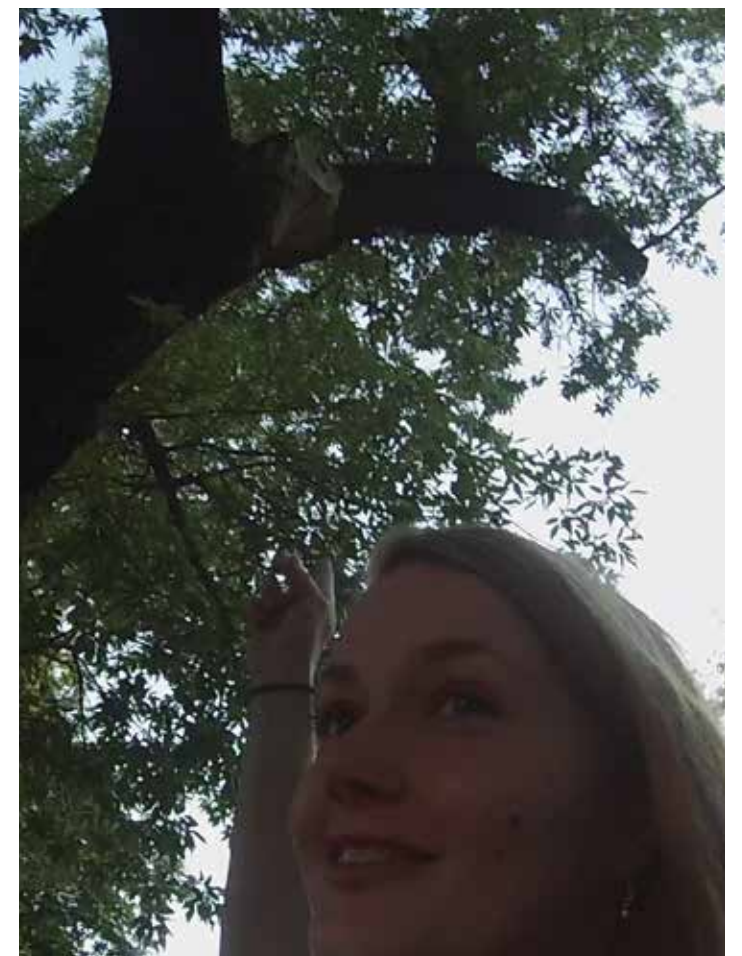
NEXT PAGE, RIGHT: *Aneta discusses the branches on the audacious tree*



“The bricks have been put around for the tree to have a nice frame I think. Then the tree said that it doesn’t want to grow there. It wants to grow everywhere.”

Trees improve air quality in cities and make urban spaces more inhabitable. But trees are often boxed in and surrounded by asphalt, as their primary purpose in cities is to cater to human needs. Most trees do not interfere with pavements and the asphalt. Many pedestrians and drivers pass trees without even paying them much notice.

One tree, however, has defied all rules. It has two twin stems that grow boldly out of the ground with branches stretching far and wide. Its leaves blow in the wind as children play close to it and as grandmothers walk their dogs over the strong roots that have challenged the pavement as much as any tree could. A few friends get together to debate the origins of this remarkable tree. They debate whether the city planners built the road around the tree or whether it indeed just grew right out of the asphalt—and, if so, then how could it possibly be allowed to grow so freely?





ABOVE:
Medium shot of the tree

BELOW:
Zdena, Hazem, Saleh and Aneta

“Why does this tree grow so much? Because it can.”

The short video art project Audacity will be available to watch online at the link below until 20 October 2019:

<https://vimeo.com/361265000>



WEST PHILLY SIDEWALKS

Yvonne



First poetry editor of two pioneer feminist magazines, *Aphra* and *Ms.*, Yvonne has received several awards including NEAs for poetry (1974, 1984) and a Leeway (2003) for fiction (as Yvonne Chism-Peace). Print publications featuring her poems include: *Bryant Literary Review*, *Pinyon*, *Nassau Review* 2019, *Bosque Press* #8, *Foreign Literary Journal* #1, *Quiet Diamonds* 2018 (Orchard Street), *161 One-Minute Monologues from Literature* (Smith and Kraus), *This Sporting Life* (Milkweed), *Bless Me, Father: Stories of Catholic Childhood* (Plume), *Catholic Girls* (Plume/Penguin), *Tangled Vines* (HBJ), *Celebrations: A New Anthology of Black American Poetry* (Follett), *Pushcart Prize Anthology*, and *We Become New* (Bantam). Excerpts from her verse memoir can be found online at *AMP*, *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*, *Poets Reading the News*, *Rigorous*, *Headway Quarterly*, *Collateral*, the *WAIF Project*, *Brain Mill Press's Voices*, *Cahoodaloodaling* and *Edify Fiction*. More excerpts are forthcoming in *American Journal of Poetry*, *Ragweed*, *Colere* and *Home: An Anthology* (Flexible Press). She was an Atrocious Poets-One City, One Poet Contest finalist.

green upside-down heart
tree drips dry vermillion tears
shoe-beaten earth revives

brave ruby buds crown
the stone fence where rich soft earth
meets hard traffic

little autumn tree
one thousand screwball smiles
helter-skelter gold

mushroom twilight air
low clouds pillow my hopscotch
through damp hushed leaves

November fog lifts
baby tree in wet lamplight
each thin branch pearl-strung

water swells with leaves
burrs, dirt. Nothing moves until
my footsteps slog through

jay blue mailbox hunched
under the storm's blunt footnote:
the great tree is down

the sky's matchstick fan
beneath clear cold night street lamp
spider web alit

gold bracket fungi
climb the sun as the dead tree stands
its long finest hour

dry leaves scuttle, pushed
by invisible commands
how my years have flown

tripped, fell headlong flat
on childhood's bicycle route
five—nonstop—walked past





All Are(n't) Welcome

Jessi Eoin



Jessi Eoin is an illustrator making fat- and disabled-positive art in the occupied Lenape lands known as Brooklyn, New York. They like to create detailed pieces with traditional mediums that emphasise the naturalness and positivity of both fatness and disability. You can find more of their work at jbeoin.com.

Walking Seattle

Priscilla Long



Priscilla Long is a Seattle-based writer of poetry, creative nonfiction, science, history, and fiction, and a long-time independent teacher of writing. She is author of five books, including a collection of memoirist creative nonfictions titled *Fire and Stone: Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (University of Georgia Press); and *Crossing Over: Poems* (University of New Mexico Press).

Walking helps me feel at home.

—Lauren Elkin



Why walk Seattle? I've lived here thirty years and should know the place by now. But a city is a labyrinth, a movie, a funhouse, a garden of planters and parks and street trees, a kaleidoscope of surging crowds, a traffic imbroglio, a puzzle (what used to be here?). Above all it's a palimpsest—buildings overwriting earlier buildings, streets overwriting roads overwriting Indian paths. Bits of the old maritime city stick up into the new city, the now city, its skyline punctured with construction cranes.

So this year I'm walking Seattle. I walk with a guidebook to Seattle's built and natural history, *Seattle Walks* by my friend David B. Williams. His book guides the newcomer or the not-so-newcomer on seventeen walks within the city and I intend to walk all seventeen.

I'll walk to see what I know and what I don't know. I'll walk just to walk. I'll walk to partake in the life of the city. I'll walk to join the long tradition of walking in cities. I think of Charles Dickens, who walked London daily, going twenty or thirty miles a stretch at a steady four miles an hour. Or George Sand, who cross-dressed and, in her words, "flew from one end of Paris to the other." Or Frank O'Hara, whose lunch-time strolls in New York form the spice and substance of his poems.



Walk No. 1: To the Waterfront

Today it rains cold rain. It's April 1. I feel low, depressed. If on Lenora you walk downhill, across Second Avenue, I take the No. 26 bus from my house in north Seattle to across First Avenue—which was formerly Front Street, downtown. I get off on Third Avenue in lower Belltown which formerly ran along the waterfront—you arrive at and walk the wrong way toward where I think the the rim of a high cliff, a remnant of the high hill that was starting point, Lenora Street, is. I cross Blanchard Street, Denny Hill, now part of the Denny regrade, so called Bell Street, Battery Street. At Wall Street I perceive my after Denny Hill was shoveled and sluiced into Elliott mistake and reverse direction. On this cold, rainy Easter Bay, creating a new quarter mile of waterfront. At the Sunday there are no crowds. Each random person I end of Lenora, there's a lookout made of steel and encounter appears to be in a state of dissolution or concrete. You look down at the waterfront, and west out dereliction. Distressed. Homeless. Dressed in rags. onto Elliott Bay. To the south a ferryboat chugs toward Possessions conveyed in grocery cart or filthy backpack. Coleman Dock; straight ahead, a container ship sits, Most establishments are closed. I feel terribly foolish loaded with boxes labeled Maersk. Looking down, I peer peering into a guidebook—a tourist in cold rain. into the luxury balconies of Seattle Marriott Waterfront

I retrace my steps. I pass the Regrade Dog Park at Third Avenue and Bell. Here's a twenty-first century phenomenon, a space designated for the enjoyment

and well-being of the canine condo resident. I arrive at Lenora Street.

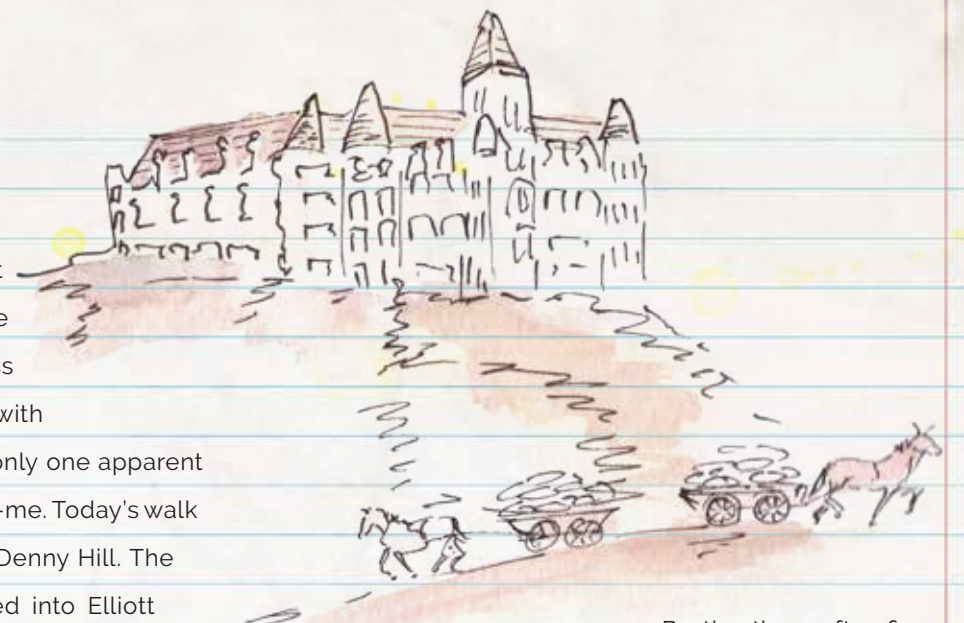
My idea is to stop along the way to make notes and sip coffee. I mean, let's be civilized. My first stop is the Seattle Aquarium, situated on the waterfront, not officially on

Walk No. 1. I'm admitted free on account of my City of Seattle Gold Card, one advantage of being 75. The place is a din of children. I pay my regards to Homer the octopus and then decide to skip it—too noisy, too raucous, too many quarrels and parental commands.

Up the hill again, to the stone-paved Post Alley, past the old steam plant to the brick and stone of Pioneer Square. In Seattle's pioneer district, First Avenue is completely torn up by construction. I go into the Pioneer Square Starbucks, order a latte, and start writing my notes. An angry "Fuck you!" cracks the air. I look up, startled. The blue-jeaned guy who so forcefully expressed his opinion is stamping out the door. I return to my notes.

Walk No. 2: Denny Hill

Downtown Seattle. A bright cheerful day in May. Lunchtime crowds, busy people in business dress hurrying along, people with important destinations. There's only one apparent tourist peering into a guidebook—me. Today's walk is to circumnavigate the former Denny Hill. The high downtown hill was dumped into Elliott Bay in five massive regrades undertaken from 1898 to 1930, the reasoning being that flat land is good for business. Denny Hill was too high for horses pulling carts. Picture Seattle in 1904. That year, a traffic count carried out at Second Avenue and Pike Street counted 3,945 horse-drawn vehicles and 14 automobiles. This I learn from HistoryLink.org, the online encyclopedia of Washington state history.



By the time, after five massive regrades, the whole of Denny Hill had been dumped into Elliott Bay, in 1930, the age of the auto had arrived. A car could have driven up the hill, no problem. And in place of the bustling commercial progress prophesied by regrade-boosters came parking lots and auto shops. The Denny regrade was a massive, costly, all-consuming infrastructural project that came to pretty much nothing, if you ask me.

Walk No. 3: Brick and Old Stone

This walk looks at geology as displayed in various old downtown buildings. At the Exchange Building (Second Avenue and Marion Street) I touch the polished pink-swirled marble-looking rock, Morton Gneiss, 3.5 billion years old, the oldest rock on earth I will likely ever touch. It was quarried, Williams tells me, in Morton, Minnesota. Down the hill, on First Avenue and Spring Street, I touch the reddish Chuckanut sandstone on the Holyoke Building. I walk back up the hill of downtown Seattle to Third Avenue and admire the multicolored brick in the Seattle Tower.

On Fourth Avenue a limestone retaining-wall retains the front garden of the Rainier Club. Formerly an exclusive (white) gentleman's club, it is still private

and still exclusive but now women and people of color are admitted. There's a dress code, and it costs. The limestone of the retaining wall was quarried in Bedford, Indiana. It formed during the millions of years of shallow sea that preceded the Midwest. It's a rough jumble of white fossils. Here are disc-shaped crinoids, bryozoans (look like Wheat Chex), clam-shaped brachiopods, and cone-shaped corals. And here are bright, magenta-colored dots crawling this way and that on the limestone, bugs as busy as lunch-hour shoppers.

Later I investigate on the Internet. They are most likely clover mites (Bryobia praetiosa)—arachnids. They are often seen on concrete, tiny and red and running about.

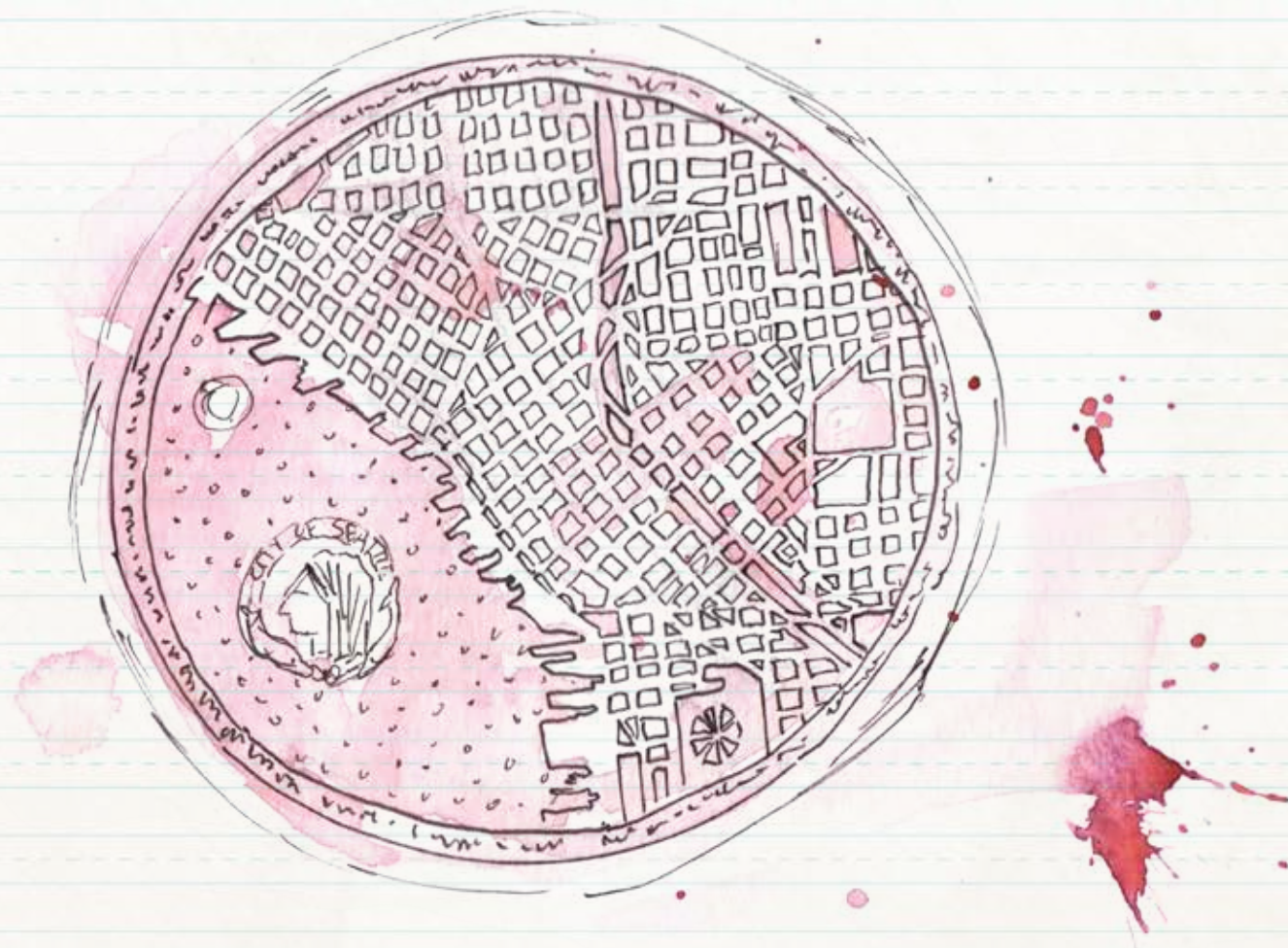
Walk No. 4: Webs of Exchange

Virginia Woolf was a walker of London streets, her excuse for taking a brisk walk in the "champagne brightness" of late afternoon air—an essential pencil that could be purchased solely at a stationer on the other side of town. This from her essay "Street Haunting." I like Woolf's notion of walking out of one's familiar surroundings in order to shed the self, the expected, the known. Along with this idea, Frederic Gros in *A Philosophy of Walking*, sees walking as a type of freedom, the freedom of being "disentangled from the web of exchange."

On this walk the web of exchange gets re-entangled at a bus stop. While waiting to board the 26 to get from North Seattle to downtown, a white-haired woman with an accent I can't place asks if this is the right side of North 40th Street to get the bus to downtown. I assure her it is. We begin chatting. She is from Sydney,

Australia, visiting her niece. We board the 26 and we talk all the way downtown. I tell her how to get to where she's going—to Pioneer Square. We're chatting pleasantly enough but our conversation has broken my reverie. When I realize she's going to the same place I am I tell her several stops early that this is my stop. We say goodbye and I get off.

Manhole covers can be artworks. At First Avenue and Spring Street I study one with a map of downtown welded onto it. I walk on. In a tunnel under the 5th Avenue Theatre I study a large terra-cotta head of an Indian that once looked down from a high building. It's a white people's idea of an Indian, wearing the feathered headdress of the Plains Indian—a head covering never used in the sartorial repertoire of any band of Northwest Indians.



Walk No. 5: Chimeras and Grotesques

It's all a rush of traffic—cars, trucks, buses, beeps, sirens, screeching brakes. A city is a noisemaker. Does it ever grow quiet?

Here on the Seattle Chamber of Commerce Building on Columbia Street at Second Avenue, on a ledge, leering down at me, squats a lion cast in concrete.

This lion has wings. Its curled paws have fat, visible claws, unnatural for a lion (real lions keep their claws sheathed except when hunting or climbing or mating). This lion's ferocious and near-human face turns toward me, its teeth bared in some sort of grin or grimace. The architect of this 1924 building was Harlan Thomas, who took his inspiration from Medieval Italian churches. So this may be a demon sent by the devil or it may be a strangely hideous guardian angel. To me it looks like a demon. What else is lurking around here that I've never before seen?

Quite a lot. On this walk, peering up at old downtown buildings, I see eagles, dolphins, ducks, mermaids, hippocampi (horses with fish tails), fishes, lions,

pelicans, a bear, a whale, and oxen heads—forty-seven of them on the old Coliseum Building at Fifth Avenue and Pike, a former grand movie palace designed by the once-famous B. Marcus Priteca, who designed grand theaters across the country. This one now serves as a Banana Republic store.

What I can't see (because I didn't bring binoculars)—seventy-eight grotesques lining the moldings on the third and fourth floors of the limestone Broderick Building at Second Avenue and Cherry Street. What is a grotesque? It is a fanciful figure carved or molded. It's like a gargoyle except gargoyles are downspouts—they gurgle. Grotesques on the Broderick Building include, according to *Seattle Walks*, dragons, Vikings, bull-faced heads, pig-faced heads, and human faces, astonished or grimacing. How fascinating that architect and artist would place these carvings so high up that there is no possibility of seeing them from the street or from anywhere else for that matter. I like to think the two men took a day to sip beer and make grotesques for the sake of their own personal amusement.

Walk No. 6: International District

What does it matter what we remember? What difference does it make to remember what happened on South Jackson Street, what happened on South King Street, what happened at the Panama Hotel, what happened around the corner at the Higo Ten Cent Store beginning on February 19, 1942? On that day President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, and the United States began rounding up persons of Japanese descent who lived on the West Coast, who were living their lives, who were innocent of any crime, who were in fact loyal to the United States. They were rounded up and sent to prison camps, forcibly wrenched from their businesses, their schools, their homes, their lives.

Walk No. 7: Hot and Hilly.

Let's just say I did it. On the hottest of hot days. So hot I forgot to record the temperature. I walked Madison Street from the waterfront at Elliott Bay all the way to Lake Washington, a route that traces the ridge and valley system created by the last ice age. Madison was one of the first named streets in Seattle, named in 1853 by Seattle founder Arthur Denny. And why am I pouring sweat and why do my feet feel like blobs of bloody pulp? This walk involves more than a thousand feet in elevation, including three hundred feet in the first mile. And it is a 3.7-mile walk. Okay, I am basically your spoiled and somewhat sedentary Seattleite and I like to complain.

To remember is to honor a community. The Panama Hotel, built in 1910, served Japantown. It had 94 single-occupancy rooms, plus a bookstore, a tea room, and a sento (traditional Japanese public bath). When persons of Japanese descent were forced into internment camps, many left their belongings in the basement of the Panama Hotel. Attempts to return these lonely suitcases, folded hand towels, washboards, tea things, and embroidered handkerchiefs largely failed. They remain. Now the building is a tearoom and a museum, with these 1942 objects exhibited, so that the community may never forget a great wrong.

A couple of blocks east of Madison, on Twenty-fourth Avenue, stands the residence of William Grose, a pioneer to Seattle who arrived in 1861, just ten years after the Denny Party. In East Madison he established a barbershop and a hotel. He was the second African American to arrive in Seattle. Time to rethink the stereotype of the white pioneer.

It's hot. Damn hot. Where's the rain when you want it? It's hard walking. I finally arrive at Lake Washington. Welcome to bikini Seattle—a long grassy slope down to the beach, covered with nearly naked sunbathers. In the waters of Lake Washington, swimmers splash and shriek.

Walk No. 8: Pocket Parks and Floating Homes

I take this walk around Lake Union with my old friend the writer Alice Lowe. The Cheshiahud Loop, a walk circumnavigating Lake Union, named after an early Native resident, is supposed to be seven miles long. Instead we walk—I know you are keen to know this—9.6 miles or 20,467 steps. Information courtesy Alice's Garmin Racing Watch.

Wherever a street ends at water, Seattle requires public access. Thus we have one hundred and forty-nine Shoreline Street Ends, pocket parks with curved paths and carved stones. There are benches, picnic tables, rocks, native plantings. At one little park, lake water laps at logs and lake words ("barge," "anchor," "tender") have been inscribed in the brick walkway. Public pressure from Friends of Street Ends resulted in legislation (Seattle City Council, 1996) to provide such public access. If not for this, private property would have placed a noose around Lake Union and cut it off. Alice and I visit Waterway 15 with its historical photos silkscreened on the rocks. We visit Peace Park, Good Turn Park, South Passage Point Park, Fairview Park, and Roanoke Street Minipark (where in 1916 William Boeing built and flew his first airplane). We visit Eastlake Bouldrome or "Pete's Park" where you can play pétanque. We stop at Lynn Street Park and again at Terry Pettus Park.

We pass docks lined with floating homes and spot a blue-clapboard-clad one for sale. We go in, don booties, and look around. It's a sweet little place with two windowseats, and upstairs, a loft bed. Everything is built in and tidy. (The burning question: Where would you put the books?) A besuited gentleman in a trim white beard comes in after us. "I want it," I tell him. "You can't have it." He smiles.

Around the lake we go, stopping for lunch at the White Swan Public House. I have batter-coated, deep-fat-fried rock fish and chips. Alice has a steelhead BLT and a grapefruit "bier" (Schofferhofer). After lunch we stop at Moss Bay, in which floats the Center for Wooden Boats. We cross Lake Union Park where sits the Museum of History & Industry. We walk the walker's path (beside a two-way bike path) along the western shore of the lake to Fremont Bridge. We talk, we take pictures, we walk, we sit, we walk some more.



Walk 9: A Bridge, A Bird, A Man

This is a sweet walk from the fish ladder at the Ballard Locks to the park on the other side. The walk continues into Discovery Park and the Daybreak Star Cultural Center, a Northwest Native cultural center run by the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation.

Upon arrival at the locks, I watch the lockage of an immense white yacht from Bellevue. I cross the locks and go down to the glass-walled fish ladder. The fish are there—salmon swimming upstream against the torrent of water washing down the ladder. These anadromous fish hatch and develop in fresh water, migrate out to sea where they live and grow, and return to their home stream to spawn (lay eggs) and die. I'm no good at telling fish apart, even while comparing the pictures on the wall to the actual fish, but I'm pretty sure these are either coho or steelhead or both.

I continue to the far side of the locks, to the small park underneath the century-old Great Northern Railroad Bridge, now owned by BNSF (Burlington Northern Santa Fe). I sit on a park bench—a place of peace and quiet and no traffic. The bridge is a one-leaved bascule bridge and its leaf remains up except when a train is crossing, as one is right now—a long freight train. Nearby, tourists are pointing cameras at something high in a tree. I look up. It's an osprey, a big bird sitting on a branch still as a decoy. I point my camera.

I continue up to Discovery Park and, after consulting my guidebook, take a turn. I walk and walk down an empty road, a steep drop on one side, woods on the other side. I come upon a parked pickup truck, a man I can't see well sitting half out the door. Without turning my head, I glance sideways at him through my dark glasses. I hope he's not a serial killer. I hope he's not any

kind of killer. Walking is a feminist issue, writes Lauren Elkin in her book, *The Flaneuse: Women Walk the City*. Yes it is.

Elkin states, "From Tehran to New York, from Melbourne to Mumbai, a woman still can't walk in the city the way a man can." I am walking the city but not entirely without fear, even in broad daylight, even here where there's no one to be seen except for me and one man apparently doing nothing. Would I walk here at night? To see the moon or the stars or to listen to the owls or the breeze sighing through the trees? Never.

At the end of this road I come to a group of posh homes, a neighborhood that ends at a high bluff overlooking Shilshole Bay. I have taken a wrong turn, obviously. I turn around and walk back past the man in his pickup, who is still apparently doing nothing. I take the correct road through deep woods, ending at the Daybreak Star Center.

Around a corner, another road through woods, and here's another man. He's heavy-set. He sits in a lawn chair next to his van, carving a piece of wood. I ask him directions to the visitor center. "To the white visitor center?" he asks. "I guess so," I answer. "What I really want is to get back to the locks without getting lost in the woods." He points the way. He asks if I would turn off the lights in his van, since he has a bad knee. I do so. This man starts talking a blue streak. Here, for some reason, I feel no sense of unease. He tells me he's carving a pipe. He is from flat big sky South Dakota. He tells of his friend who comes to visit in Ballard and notes the many Swedes who live there. The two friends put a big sign on the house. "No Whites Allowed. Swedes and Indians Only." I chuckle along with him and then say goodbye.

Walk 10: A Walk in the Woods

"Forest bathing," or shinrin-yoko, as it's called in Japan, lowers blood pressure. It reduces the stress hormone cortisol. It boosts the immune system. It boosts a feeling of well-being. It quiets feelings of hostility and anger. Walking in a forest for forty minutes is good for you. Walking and talking in a forest is good for you. My sister Liz and I do our forest bathing by walking from Green Lake along Ravenna Boulevard, through Cowen Park and down into the Ravenna Ravine: sudden silence, deep green, massive trees, the burble of Ravenna Creek. We do our forest bathing for about three hours, right in the middle of Seattle.

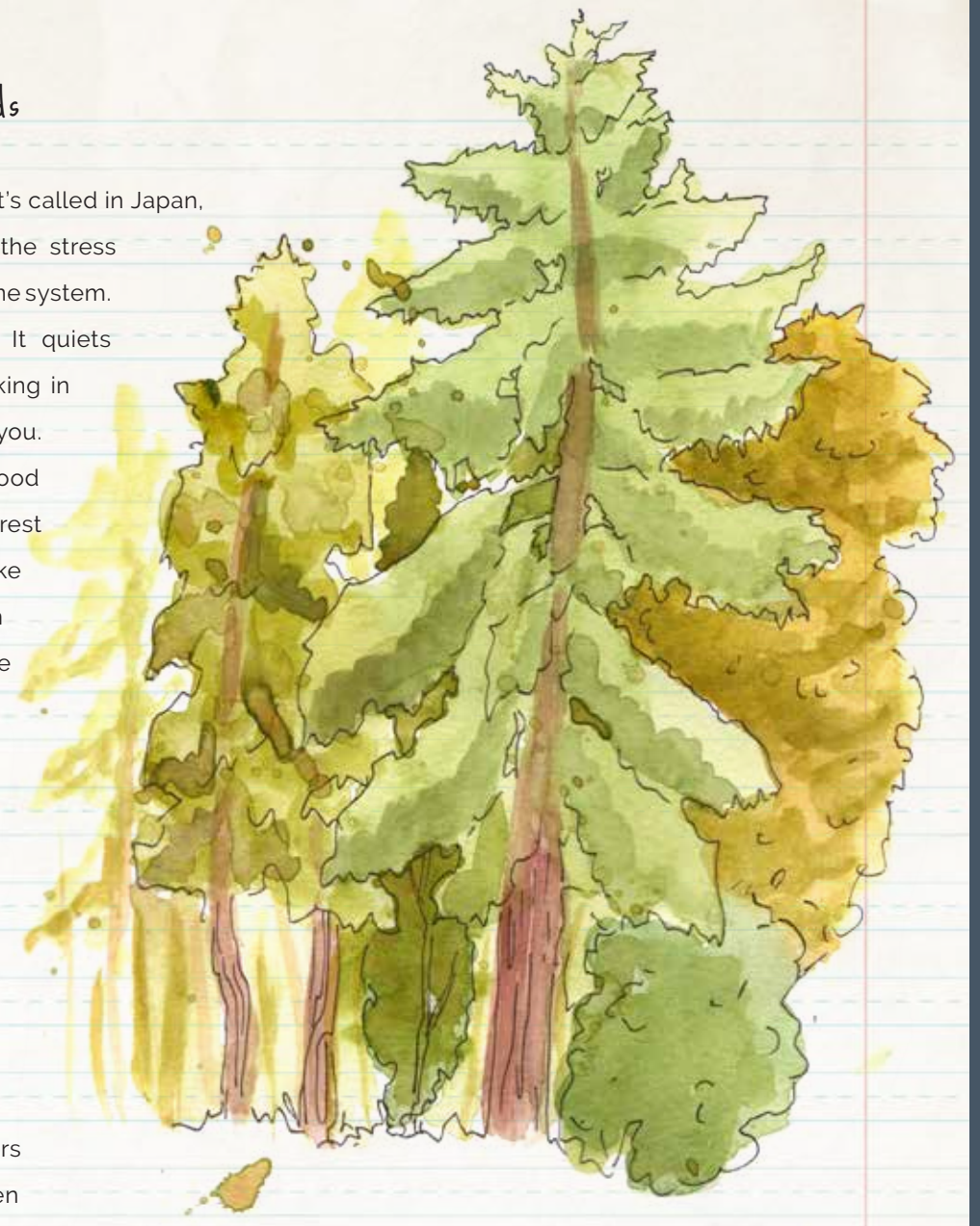
Walk 11: Smoke and Ash

This walk in north Seattle meanders along Thornton Creek, which has been daylighted from its long pipe in an enormous community and city effort. The work to restore the wooded creek is still ongoing, an uphill struggle against the invasive knotweed and pollutants such as e-coli.

On this day the Thornton Creek walk turns into the walk from hell. I have forgotten my water bottle. The Seattle sky is thick and sickly, stained yellow. I'm having trouble breathing. I figure there must be something wrong with me. There is a quiet ravine and a small wooden bridge across Thornton Creek—I stop a while to catch my breath and listen to the creek burble. Then I climb a concrete stairway to the street. I must cross

the car-clotted, fume-pervaded Lake City Way twice. It is possible I am experiencing cardiac arrest. I make my long long way up 105th Street to Meadowbrook pond, which appears to be closed for construction. I return to my starting place and sit on the dry grass and call my friend with whom I am to have dinner to come and get me. A minute later I text, bring water. Before long, I am rescued.

Later that evening I read the news. Smoke is pouring into Seattle from fires in Eastern Washington and in British Columbia. Air quality, abysmal. It is advisable to stay indoors.





Walk 12: Magnuson Park

Within this large park there hums and buzzes a wetland with green scum on the water and cattails and sedges and willows and birches dipping their branches into the still water. There are dry gravel paths throughout, benches to sit on, and artworks placed here and there. It's quiet and quite glorious.

An artwork I especially like: Straight Shot by Perri Lynch Howard. It consists of columnar limestone boulders, twelve columns extending for a kilometer, the distance doubling between each pair. Howard placed them in perfect alignment so that surveyors could use them to calibrate their equipment. Beauty and utility in one shot.

Walk No. 13: Rest in Peace

A burial ground is a peaceful place. The walk today begins at the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) graveyard on Capitol Hill. Buried here are veterans of the Civil War and their wives. I sit for quite a time, the lone visitor. It is quiet and grassy and the curved rows of flat tombstones are level with the ground. I photograph them. There are five hundred and twenty six burials here. The gravestone that most affects me reads: "Laid at Rest / Cassie wife of / C. W. P. Osgood / Died Apr. 16, 1898 / Aged 50 years." Online the Friends of the GAR Park list the burials. I learn that Cassie was born in Canada, and her husband, Clarence, a private in the Civil War, was born in Maine. Most of the burials are privates. Some are listed as musicians. Six soldiers—

one was Gideon Stump Bailey—fought in the Colored Infantries.

My great-great-grandfather, William Bauman (1829–1909), was a veteran of the Civil War. The government created an extensive paper trail on him in an attempt to get reimbursed after he misplaced (sold?) a government-issued bayonet. In turn, he petitioned the government—regularly for his remaining decades—to get a pension he believed he was owed. On one visit to a physician in pursuit of said pension, he fell down on the man's office floor, dead drunk.

His efforts were not rewarded; neither were the government's.

Walk 14: Connecting the Dots

"Walking is mapping with your feet," writes Lauren Elkin in *Flaneuse*. "It helps you piece a city together, connecting up neighborhoods that might otherwise have remained discrete entities..." Indeed.

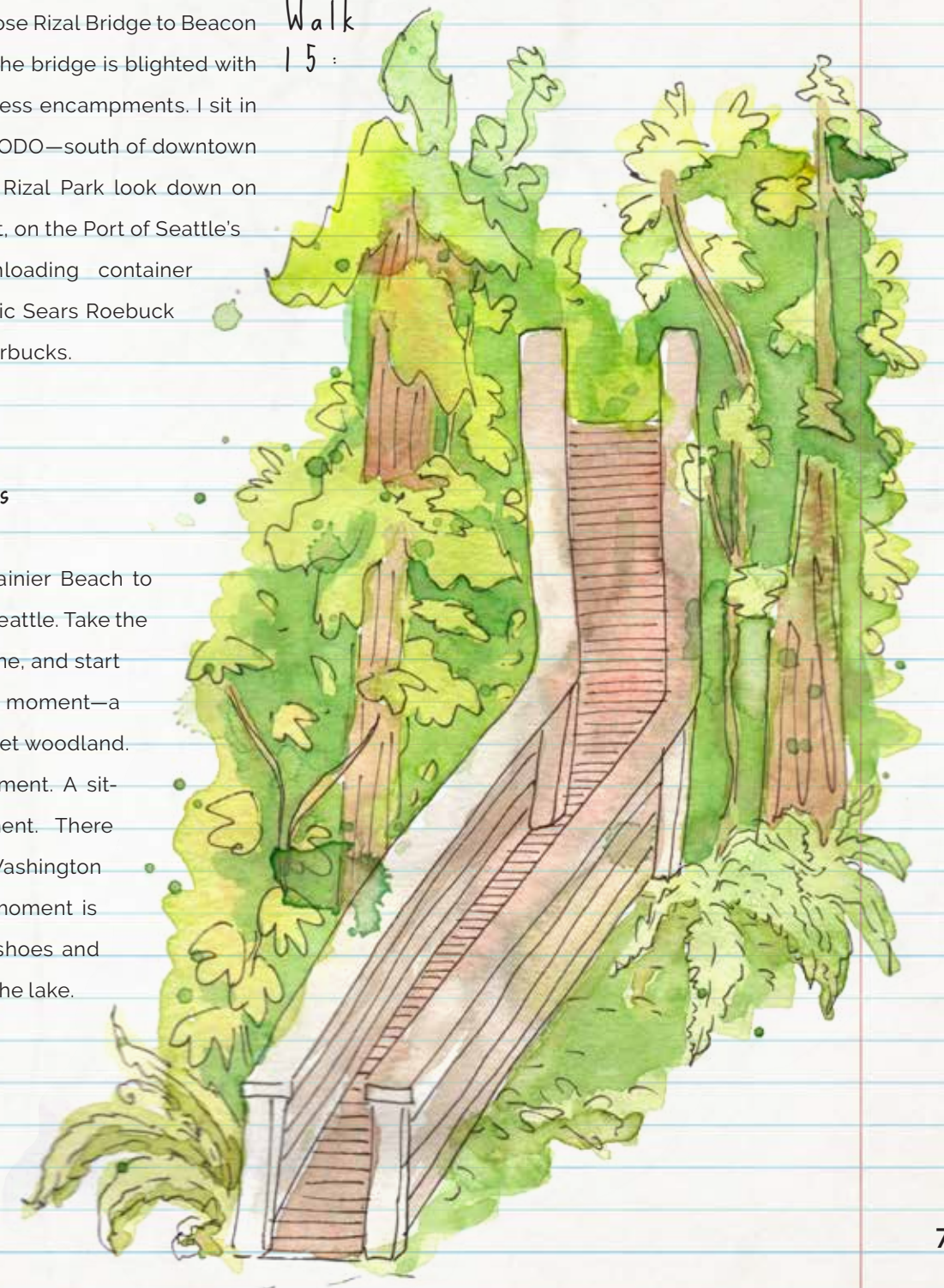
I have a Vietnamese hot pot in the International District at Thanh Vi, and after lunch, cross Nam Duong King (King Street) and walk across the Jose Rizal Bridge to Beacon Hill. The deep ravine below the bridge is blighted with trash and dotted with homeless encampments. I sit in Jose Rizal Park high above SODO—south of downtown Seattle. Beacon Hill and its Rizal Park look down on Seattle's industrial waterfront, on the Port of Seattle's gigantic gantry cranes unloading container vessels, and on SODO's iconic Sears Roebuck building that now houses Starbucks.

I've been to Beacon Hill by car. I've been to the International District. I've been to SODO. Only by mapping them with my feet do I see how intimately they are connected.

Walk 15:

South Seattle Moments

This is a long walk from Rainier Beach to Columbia City, all in South Seattle. Take the No. 7 bus to the end of its line, and start walking. There is a wetland moment—a boardwalk through a very wet woodland. There is a grassy-park moment. A sit-under-the-Gerry-oak moment. There is a long walk along Lake Washington on this hot day. The best moment is sitting on a log, taking off shoes and socks, and dangling feet in the lake. Ah.



Walk 16: Seattle's Beaver Dam

Some of the old woods and wetlands of Seattle are in a process of recovery, aided by members of the species that once compromised or even killed them—us. Now here is the Delridge ("Dell Ridge") section of West Seattle. It includes a wooded area that surrounds Longfellow Creek, which is partially unpiped (daylighted). A woodland path follows the creek and then crosses it over the stunning Salmon Bone Bridge, made of cedar planks and steel pipes curved in the shape of a salmon's rib bones. This by environmental artist Lorna Jordan. In Longfellow Creek, the salmon still struggle with industrial pollution that continues to wash into the creek, especially during heavy rains.

But here is a beaver dam! A beaver lodge and the pond backed up behind it. In Seattle! And no one introduced these beavers, they came by themselves to set up lodge-keeping in Longfellow Creek.

Walk 17: Mistakes Were Made

The final walk in Williams's book is to Alki Beach in West Seattle, landing spot of the Denny Party, Seattle's first settlers. Now, for me, these walks also serve as bus camp, where you figure out the Metro route (Metro makes it easy) to any part of the city, to the start of any walk. (I like riding the bus. It is also true that my lack of depth perception prevents me from biking or driving.) For this walk I take the Red Rapid Ride C bus from downtown Seattle to Alaska Junction in West Seattle, transfer to the No. 50 bus, and get off at the wrong stop. I decide I can walk from 44th Street and Lander to the start point, 58th Street and Lander. On my way (in a very suburban-looking part of town) I pass this message written large in pink chalk on the sidewalk: TURN AROUND. Really? You've got to be kidding.

I come to an impasse: a highway. Okay, okay. I turn around. I walk back to the bus stop and wait twenty minutes for the next No. 50 and take it to the end of the line: Alki Beach. Where, instead of going on the prescribed walk I go to a Starbucks and purchased a 12-oz mocha. I then go to the seawall and for an hour look out over Puget Sound and watch the gulls.



Fredéric Gros writes that while walking "There is virtually no need to decide, consider, calculate." That's me. I walk to be relieved of my mind, to be relieved of my history, to be relieved of my responsibilities. I walk to get lost in surging crowds, honking traffic, sirens, lights, motion. I walk to join the life of the city. I walk to float with the tide of humanity. I walk to be anybody, to be nobody, to watch and note and see. I walk to do what I find impossible to do when I am not walking: I walk to do nothing.

Reading List

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Merlin Coverley, *The Art of Wandering: The Writer as Walker* (Harpenden, Herts: Oldcastle Books Ltd., 2012).

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Naming Nature, Naming Myself

Suzanne Garnish Segady



Suzanne Segady is a poet and essayist whose works have appeared in *A Poetic Inventory of Rocky Mountain National Park*, *Pilgrimage Magazine*, and *Zoomorphic*. She is fascinated at the boldness of squirrels and how trees just seem to invite themselves into her yard. She lives with her two dogs in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

illustrated by
Mariell Fotland



Mariell is a Norwegian water-colour artist/illustrator.

From her base in the west of Norway, she takes her inspiration from the mountains and the fjords and the rich bird life there.

I loaf and invite my soul

— Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (Quotes throughout are from "Song of Myself")

I rouse myself at 4:00 am, start the coffee, and welcome in the quiet. I've always been an early riser; I'm not sure if it's chronic insomnia or just plain love of the pre-dawn hush. That precious time, that time utterly alone of other humans, that time before the sun drains the darkness of its mystery—that time is mine. This practice began as an introvert's survival mechanism: as a high school English teacher, I find myself drained from the incessant noise and demands of my profession. The early start gives me at least one full hour to myself, by myself, and is the only time I am completely myself.

If I am lucky, my brain releases the stress of the workday coming up (and those behind), stops rehearsing potential discussions and distractions, and relaxes into the bittersweet warmth of the drink and the waking silence of the morning.

I have you reckoned the earth much?... Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems/ You shall possess the good of the earth and sun...

It is early spring. There is a particular freshness to the air in spite of the winterish chill. Here in the Colorado high desert, we are blessed with cold mornings, warm days, cool nights. There is little above to keep the heat down.

This home sports a beautiful deck, the preferred outdoor feature in these suburbs. But in the morning I choose the east-facing front porch. I feel the light slowly growing towards me. I sit on the cracked stoop in the dark and listen.

The triplet call of the robin dances the currents like notes on a musical staff, confident, clear, in perfect pitch. The robin could be in the backyard; could be blocks away. There is no other sound competing with his song this early. Even traffic is no more than a hum in the background.

House finches awaken next, trilling a buoyant counterpoint to the strident robin melody. It lilts against the couplets, water over and around rocks, lithe and supple, playfully teasing the purposeful, determined thrushes.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,/ And acknowledge red, yellow, white playing within me,/ And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,/... And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet it trills pretty well to me...

There was a time when I didn't know the names of the birds that share my home. The songs were unrecognized, undedicated. They were no more than beautiful backdrop to the sounds of the city. They decorated the air without attribution. They were strangers to me.

Now I name them: Robin, a thrush, unrelated to the English Robin Red-Breast. Finch, house and purple—they are scarlet and orange and vermillion, too seeming delicate for the joyous voices they share. Sparrow, chipping and house—the former, native, the latter, naturalized little citizens of my yard. Clownish nuthatches (pygmy, red-breasted), and their cousins, the bold chickadees (mountain, black-capped).

I can now discern three species of dove: one of them, White-Winged, a native of the desert Southwest is unaware that it doesn't belong here. They peck

alongside squirrels for leftovers beneath feeders. The Mourning and the Ring-Necked join them in and under the pines. I greet two hawks (Cooper's and Sharp-Shinned) and many corvidae (throaty caws of crows, barks of magpies, rusty hinge calls of jays), so smart, so beautiful. They love the wind.

Now each song is a part of my voice, too.

There are passersthrough still who escape me. Some I name gingerly, some with wonder, some not at all. But I note their voices in mine, a poor imitation, a mystery. I will learn them, too.

And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,/ And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes.

I pour myself a second cup of coffee and return.

The sky is tinting gray, the storied stars are fading into morning. I no longer recognize the constellations; I have only fragments of their meaning left to guide me.

The trees are shadows, lace and line; they dance stiffly in the breath of wind, the wind that is a constant motion along these foothills. These are ponderosas, named for the heavy, "ponderous" lumber they provide. They are among the most common of trees across North America, but these three have been my companions for nearly 50 years, and they are at least 10 years older than that. We are of an age.

I am large, I contain multitudes.... I too am untranslatable.

The backyard is younger and unintentional. An aspen grove, against all conventional wisdom, has made itself at home. A variety of sumacs, lanky and prehistoric, resist the chainsaw with stubborn and graceful returns.

Chokecherry feeds birds and the squirrels that nest in a tall elm that catches the first dawn light. They live together, in a tussle for space and light, an urban forest of its own making.

Trees hold a communal wisdom. They are height and breadth, leaf and bark, but they are more. They are the birds that nest in them, the squirrels that climb them, they are the playhouses of children, the foodsource, the lumber, the shade, the oxygen.... Their voices are the voices of many. Trees do not love loneliness. Their branches reach toward, touch and cross each other; squirrels and raccoons cross from the north end of our property to the south, over the roof to the fence and beyond without ever setting paw to earth. The travelers bring back with them seeds and songs from other places and share them with the trees and me.

Later, when the sun hits just so, the ponderosas will scent the air with vanilla and spice. I will not be here then.

There is that in me--I do not know what it is--but I know it is in me./ I do not know it--it is without name--it is a word unsaid,/ It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Silhouettes become dimensions, dimensions become forms, forms expand to identity. The light begins filling the corners of the horizons and I reassemble myself from the inside. The voices around me reinforce my own; my song grows from solo to harmony. I gain strength these mornings. The unseen birds, the trees -- aware and silent in the layered dark, all have named me, too. I am learning lessons I may now begin to utter, to teach.

Floorboards creak from behind me, within the house. My dogs are anxious to make their own voices heard, to chase the squirrels from their backyard nests. Hall light softly casts my shadow against the earth in front of me. I turn away from the sun and go indoors.

I turn from earth to world.

It is time to watch clocks, reward industriousness, to remember the lessons of paper and pen. I will join the tumult of voices that create my livelihood. These are good things, but they are only my outline. They name me "teacher," "co-worker," "citizen," "neighbor." Tomorrow I will return here, to a cool concrete stoop, to begin the day. It is here that the outline grows roots, and takes on dimension, filled with the soft colors of dawn and charm of birdsong. From here I will, quietly and considerately, continue naming myself.



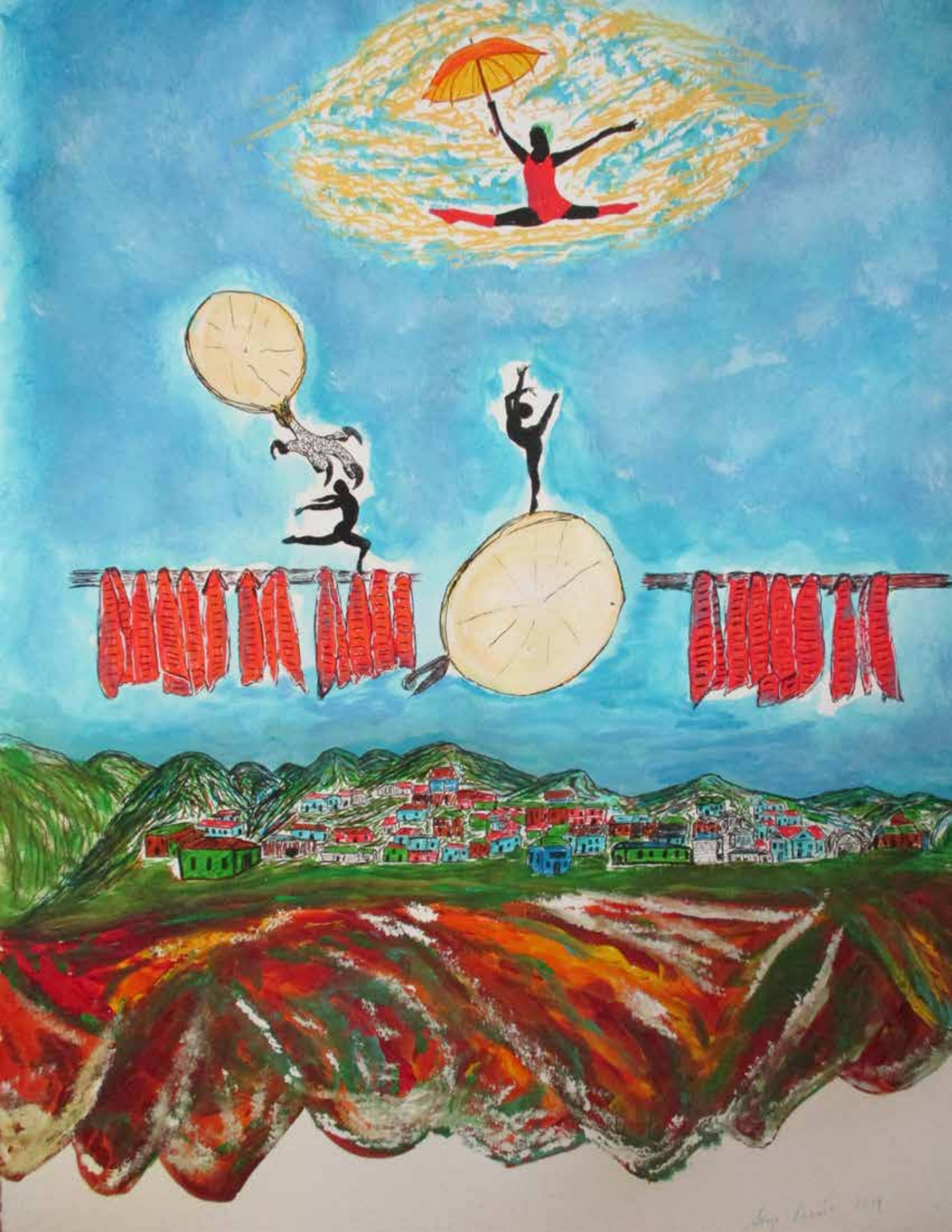
A series of paintings

Serge Lecomte



Serge Lecomte was born in Belgium. He and his parents came to the States where he spent his teens in South Philly and then Brooklyn. After graduating from Tilden H. S. he worked for New York Life Insurance Company. He joined the Medical Corps in the Air Force and was sent to Selma, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement. There he was a crew member on helicopter rescue. He received a B.A. in Russian Studies from the University of Alabama, and earned an M.A. and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in Russian Literature with a minor in French Literature. He worked as a Green Beret language instructor at Fort Bragg, NC from 1975-78. In 1988 he received a B.A. from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in Spanish Literature. He worked as a language teacher at the University of Alaska (1978-1997). He is a published poet, novelist, playwright and some of his paintings have appeared in several magazines.





PREVIOUS PAGE: *Discover Your own Voice*

LEFT: *Cultural Exchange*

NEXT PAGE, LEFT: *Abandoned village of Ukivok, Alaska*

NEXT PAGE, RIGHT: *Life after burn*







Field Notes: Forest Park, July 2019

Eric Butler



Eric Butler recently completed his Master of Science in Environmental Science and Management at Portland State University. When not practicing urban ecology, he writes in a variety of forms and genres. He can usually be found somewhere outdoors.

So far this morning my sensory attention has been tuned to my eyes, seeking out the posts and tree tags of the research plot I have been looking for. Rounding a ridge between ravines, I stop abruptly, jarred alert by an unmistakable smell: cigarette. I'm far enough off-trail I should be alone here, but I can't see anyone else and I don't know which direction to look in the diffuse, aimless breeze. No sound, either, but a raven and the distant gray noise of the city. Yet, the smell is strong enough I feel certain it's close. I have a lot to get done, however, so I carry on to my first site and do my best to put this uncanny moment out of my mind. The work, recording tree diameters, requires enough concentration to help do so. A few hours later I'm just wrapping up when I discover the source, perhaps fifty meters away up the ravine: a campsite, almost invisible beneath a tarp the color of the ivy-cleared hillside.

Being an ecologist in this city means constant exposure to the impacts of the housing crisis. Tents, tarps, and trash middens are outdoor sights as routine today as trees, birds, and streams. The 2008 financial collapse knocked the breath out of housing construction and shook loose many of those at the bottom of the economic ladder. A series of upward jolts in rental costs, courtesy of the so-called recovery, has since done the same to many more. The upshot, in cities up and down both coasts, is scenes the news has taught us to associate more with São Paulo or Mumbai: tents and

makeshift shelters crammed into any empty, unpoliced space available between high-rise condominiums and gated mini-mansions. Here in Portland, shanties are filling the public riverfront, a once-beloved rail trail, and a charming Olmstead park in an upscale neighborhood. The highway department buries the shoulders of freeway onramps in boulders to prevent more campers from being killed by traffic. The police push crowds of downtown sidewalk-dwellers in weeklong circles around each block to give crews a chance to clean the pavement. Lines spill out of overwhelmed shelters, and waitlists for transitional housing are a tragicomedy to match the market price of a single-bedroom apartment. It is at once heartbreaking, embarrassing, and surreal: a slow-motion catastrophe always lingering just at the edge of our awareness like a fug of cigarette we can't ever seem to escape.

The old excuses we've too long relied on to justify looking away—laziness, easy welfare, heroin—no longer hold up. I was once tasked with removing a campsite, the roofless home of a day laborer, from beside a creek. The man (I found his tools, spare work pants, and an old pay stub bearing his name) had constructed himself an ingenious shelter, and maintained the dignity of a clean space. I found it impossible to blame the site's then-absent occupant, even as I cringed at the makeshift chamberpot he had been emptying into the creek. Part of me even admired him for defiantly scraping a life

from the precarious edge of an unfair world. Chased from more visible spaces by shame, forcible uprooting, or trauma-fueled fear of others, many of the unhoused disperse into remote corners of our urban natural areas. There, they leave messes unavoidable without easy access to restrooms or trash disposal, cut new trails into fragile hillsides with their necessary comings and goings, and displace sensitive animals into their own sort of homelessness. That there is such conflict between our most precious wild places and our most vulnerable people suggests that our society can't quite figure out how to value either. Even in progressive Portland, while the city flails at the Gordian knot of the housing crisis, it plans to cut \$8 million from next year's parks budget.

My day in the field passed without incident. Perhaps the unknown smoker watched me, absorbed in my work, from a distance, asking for no trouble. There seemed no point in reporting what looked to be a quiet, well-kept residence. At best it would have meant the occupant relocating to some other, perhaps more pristine site; at worst, it would have meant calling in the law's retribution against someone whose only real crime was being rendered all but invisible, their entire, desperate reality reduced in our eyes to a brown tarp on a hillside and a mysterious odor of cigarette.



Readers Corner

Bengaluru to Bangalore

Vibha Rohilla



Vibha Rohilla is a college student who lived in Bangalore for a majority of her childhood. She loves observing the way nature clashes with rapid urbanization in her hometown, resulting sometimes in harmony, but most other times, in chaos.

Rain drops down
on us in a cascade of tiny bullets,
thunder grumbles as monsoon unleashes
mid-afternoon. The day was boiling from
the heat fueled and burned while
we all sat in standstill traffic.

It's too hot, the city sweats
as apartment towers melt into the sky.
Just ten years ago, no one had
AC. Day by day, the heat is
stronger, the storms more violent,
the clouds cry harder than before.

Today's winter is yesterday's summer.
This town was all ready for retirement:
a cool breeze drifting in and out,
seniors in sweaters and monkey caps,
lotuses sitting serenely on clear lakes,
the Garden City resting peacefully.

Boom! Like a lightning strike, we
were attacked by technology that
seems to be improving life everywhere
but here. Our mellow town strains
under this concrete jungle of
one crore¹ people.

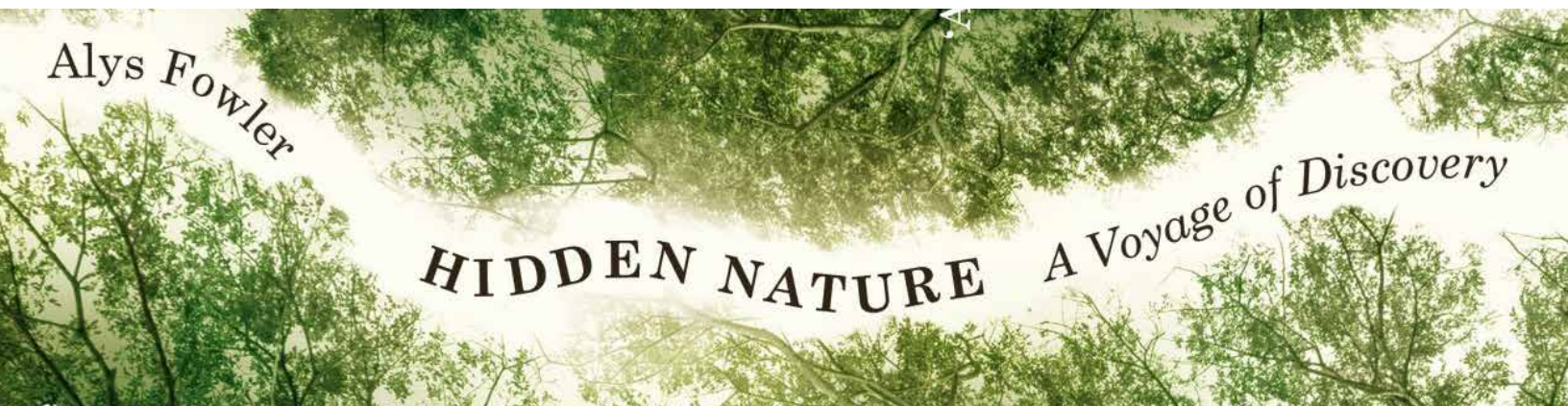
So every day after we give it
a fever, the city sends black
clouds storming in like bruises
unleashing pain, as we have, on us.
Watch water choke the streets, shut
down our arteries until
the heartbeat
stops.

Let us not mistake our man-made
monstrosities for the natural beauties
that we crave, that came before us.
The lakes are not cold sheets of snow.
The garbage pile is not a grassy hill.
The smog is not blissful, wispy fog.

Let us bring Bengaluru back to Bangalore.

¹ Ten million





Hidden Nature:

A Voyage of Discovery

by Alys Fowler

Reviewed by Hetty Mosforth



Hetty is a keen swimmer and reader, as well as a novice writer. Her work was previously shortlisted in the Writer'sHQ 'With Love: Fight Back Flash Competition'.

Hidden Nature recounts the experiences of professional gardener Alys Fowler, as she comes out, leaves her husband, and explores the entirety of the Birmingham canal network. A born adventurer, Alys finds unexpected beauty while paddling along the city's myriad canals in her inflatable kayak.

The book was given to me by a good friend, at a time when I was living away from Birmingham, which is where I grew up. To begin with, I mainly enjoyed spotting the familiar place names and landmarks included in the book, but as I read on, I found it offers an instructive way of looking at the world. Alys lingers over "disused waterways, hidden tracks and ghost canals," creating a sense that she is among the first to lay appreciative eyes on them. *Hidden Nature* traces out a way of engaging with overlooked places and where it led, I followed.

At the beginning of *Hidden Nature*, Alys is not keen on living in Birmingham. After leaving London for financial reasons, it takes her some time to adjust to her new home. Unlike in London, in Birmingham she is able to afford both a study and a garden. Given her profession, this is no small matter. However, what really cements her love for the city is its canals. Exploring them allows

Alys to claim a part of Birmingham for herself and to connect with the urban environment on her own terms.

Alys recognises that the canals are always in flux, "the sides [...] crumbling, the banks bursting with wild things". In this, she sees something of her own changeability. Exploring the canals is a project that soothes Alys's anxiety about her shifting identity and gives her space to reflect. The love she develops for the canals shows through in the wealth of information she shares about them. She also digs deep into Birmingham's history. At one point she reveals that the city's ubiquitous red bricks are made of a clay "formed during the Upper Triassic Period, when Birmingham was semi-desert". By seeing the city's post-industrial present and millennia-long past concurrently, she pinpoints a richness in its environment that is often missed.

Reading *Hidden Nature* let me experience the canals second-hand and feel close to home, without being homesick. I could think about my city while figuring out ways of connecting with the new spaces in my life. Though I have never kayaked down a canal, I have often swum outside. *Hidden Nature* reframed the experience for me. Before reading the book, I had been oddly disappointed to find out that the lake in my local park is man-made. I still swam there, people still fished and boats still sailed on windy days, but some of the magic was gone. The lake felt tame. *Hidden Nature* put an end to this snobbishness and encouraged me to recognise that urban environments have as much to offer as untouched places.

One particular swimming spot shifted in my esteem. At the heart of a housing estate, forty minutes north of Birmingham, past semi-detached properties and corner

shops, an old quarry has been turned into a swimming lake. Changing rooms have been set up in abandoned shipping containers, and you only have to pay a few pounds to swim any day of the week. The water is deeper than anything naturally occurring, making it as black as ink. Though the lake is not particularly picturesque, it is impossible not to feel giddy swimming across its surface. As with Alys's exploration of the canals, visiting the lake feels like discovering a wonderful secret. After reading *Hidden Nature*, I stopped comparing the lake to what it wasn't—not a Scottish loch, northern tarn or secluded stretch of sea—and instead appreciated it for simply being a source of joy.

Towards the end of *Hidden Nature*, Alys comments that in her kayak no one can touch her and that this makes her feel safe. For me, the water has always been a place of safety and a temporary escape from problems. *Hidden Nature* reminded me not to let my prejudices get in the way of that. Alys's journey on the canals is a testament to what can be gained by putting effort into loving your surroundings. As much happiness can be found in crumbling canals and suburban lakes as in any untouched wilderness.



Ghost Trees: *Nature and People in a London Parish*

by Bob Gilbert
2018 Saraband, Salford

Reviewed by Alison Green



Alison Green is an award winning writer who lives in Dorset, UK. She has published two novels set in Provence and writes a popular blog, centred predominately on her innumerable walks in the English countryside. Alison uses photography to act as an aide memoire.



Sometimes, a book is so good it's impossible to stop reading it. Page-turners they're called colloquially. 'Finished it in two days', we exclaim proudly whilst looking anxiously around for the next big thing. It's like binge-watching a box-set with a pile of hot buttered toast to hand. Easy.

But there's another, less well-known, criterion for a good read: the book you make yourself close early; deferring one's available word time because the thought of finishing it altogether is just too unbearable. You'll forgive me if I dare to suggest that your average nature book, no matter how expert, prolific and loved its author may be, seldom falls into this pile. Let's face it, the nature writing genre has erupted like a hitherto dormant volcano in recent years. To paraphrase British comedian Eric Morcambe, some well-known authors seem to be annually reproducing the same book with all the right words in the wrong order. Others, obviously horrified at being lumped into the common mix, have suddenly decided they're from a different planet. I recently read an interview with such a famous person who now assures us he is NOT a nature writer: 'I write about the countryside', he claims from some mist-ridden hilltop where irony is beyond view.

The London Wetland Centre is a glorious expanse of marshland and lakes within sight of much of the city skyline and chock-a-block with birdlife. Peregrine falcons, for example, fly here from their nest atop Charing Cross Hospital. I found Bob Gilbert's *Ghost Trees* tucked away on a shelf in the gift shop. And although it shouldn't be hidden behind flocks of chaffinch-covered tea-towels and notelets, but displayed in full view of everyone, it's kind of apposite that such a work of brilliant observations on urban nature should sit quietly minding its own business, not waiting for opinion leaders. Nonetheless, it was a fortuitous find: the gift to

oneself that never stops giving. In fact, as I write, I have saved the final ten pages just to squeeze out a little more joy.

It's not immediately apparent who Bob Gilbert is. He's not a man of self-importance. At some point, we learn that he's married to the parish priest of Poplar, a far from salubrious area of the East End of London; although, like most of the one-time slums, it is fast becoming attractive to wealthier home-seekers, particularly the younger financiers from Canary Wharf.

If you read the synopsis on the cover, you'd be forgiven for thinking this is a book about trees. Well, to some extent it is. But Bob's passion is passing on his empirical research on a tiny portion of one of the world's most famous capital cities. This gorgeous book is about evolution; about history from the Neolithic onwards; pagan rituals and folklore; politics; topography; zoology; education; religion; architecture; literature and so on. If you think he's aiming too high, too far and too superficially, think again. In fact, stop thinking and read his book because you're going to learn a lot more than you could ever have anticipated.

Obviously, trees make an appearance, starting with the poplar of Poplar which he has trouble locating. He also spends a whole chapter looking at Mulberry trees which have a varied history in the East End. I know from my own walks that the Thames is overgrown with unexpected Russian history between Greenwich and Tower Bridge. Peter the Great, along with a delinquent entourage, frequented this part of the Thames, generally causing havoc and ruining the homes in which he was invited to stay. The arborealist, John Evelyn, made much of the Mulberry tree in Sayes Court Park, attributed to the Russian Czar. Today, the park is haunted by shady folk hiding amongst the overgrowth. Gilbert isn't as judgemental as I: he's a watcher of

the relationships between flora and folk, following in the steps of his hero: another Gilbert—Gilbert White, who wrote a seminal text based merely on personal observations.

Bob doesn't have an angle. For instance, when he wants to discover the hidden rivers of the city, he's both flexible and methodical in his approach. On trying to discover Black Ditch, he undertakes a spiritual excursion in the company of a dowser. Having identified the point at which the lost river would have emptied into the Thames, he then objectively retraces the route with a scientific explorer who is keen to explain natural dips and rises in the modern roadways. And what unexpected satisfaction ensues for the reader on learning that, despite a few deviations, the scientist and the spiritualist arrive at the same point.

Gilbert has trudged his way around the inner-city in the manner that Dickens walked the streets of London, meticulously noting what lies on the visible surface and in the less obvious understory. Included in his travels is his own back garden; he records every single tree within and their most intimate moments. Against all apparent odds in the concrete jungle, he has accounted for 94 different varieties, but this is not mere typology: this is a detailed, caring study of how the trees are behaving and why, undertaken and shared in a gloriously uplifting volume.

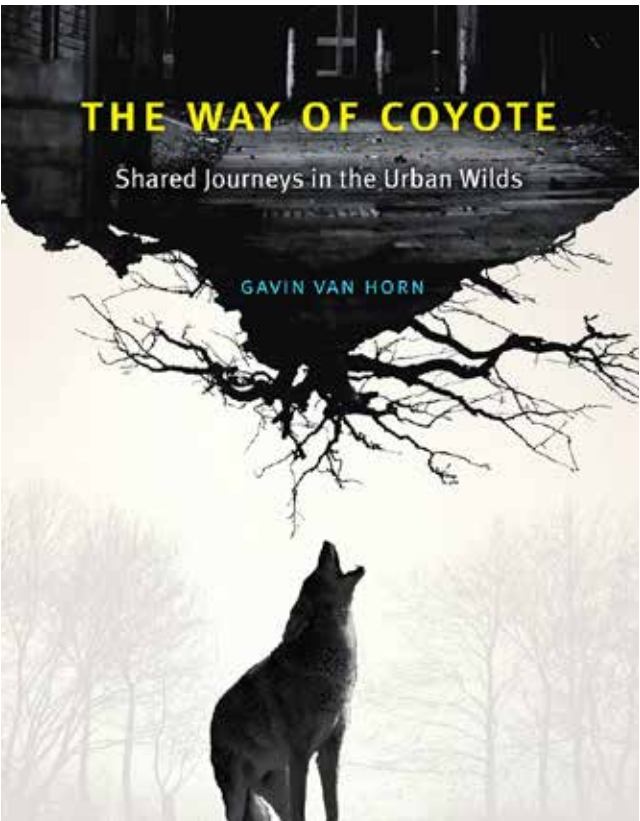
Other reviews of this book, by folk more listened to than I, view it as yet another warning against the effects of globalisation and the ways in which the human race has detached itself from nature. I disagree. Bob Gilbert is far too subtle to go for the well-worn knee caps. His book is a joyous celebration of urban nature and nothing short of an encouragement to everyone to simply look at what exists in plain sight.

Way of the Coyote:
*Shared Journeys in the
Urban Wilds*

by Gavin Van Horn

In *The Way of the Coyote*, Gavin Van Horn's attempt to articulate an urban land ethic, Van Horn encounters Chicago's beavers, black-crowned night herons, monarch butterflies, bison, and, of course, coyotes; he finds them in pocket parks, highlines, and waterways, and on the shores of the vast Lake Michigan. Along the way he also meets with the many inspiring people working to understand, protect, and restore the urban environment.

“I celebrate the city and its possibilities.”



Darwin Comes to Town:
*How the Urban Jungle Drives
Evolution*

by Menno Schilthuizen

Schilthuizen takes the reader around the globe as he entertains with stories of plants and animals developing ingenious adaptations to the world's fastest growing ecosystem: the city. This global perspective is apt given that Schilthuizen believes the world's urban jungles are becoming increasingly alike, with new technologies shared across countries, creating the same pressures on local flora and fauna. Schilthuizen points to one positive side effect of this situation: it could lead to greater collaboration among cities, as they work together to tackle the common challenges they share. Schilthuizen also offers some tips to help cities plan for their unique role as drivers of evolution. By allowing plants to grow freely, including non-native species, preserving non-urban habits within cities, and protecting fragments of green instead of connection them (ideas that go against the current tenants of urban planning and conservation), Schilthuizen believes we can create truly Darwinian cities.



“[U]rban planners could do worse than yield to that inconvenient truth of urban evolution.”

Car Park Life:
*A Portrait of Britain's
Unexplored Urban Wilderness*

by Gareth E. Rees

Enter the wild (and sometimes dark) world of Britain's car parks as Gareth E. Rees criss-crosses the country in search of car park life. He finds plenty of it in the form of shrubs, trees, flowers, foxes, and birds. But peel back the thin corporate veneer and a world of boy racers, murder, and sex waits to be discovered.

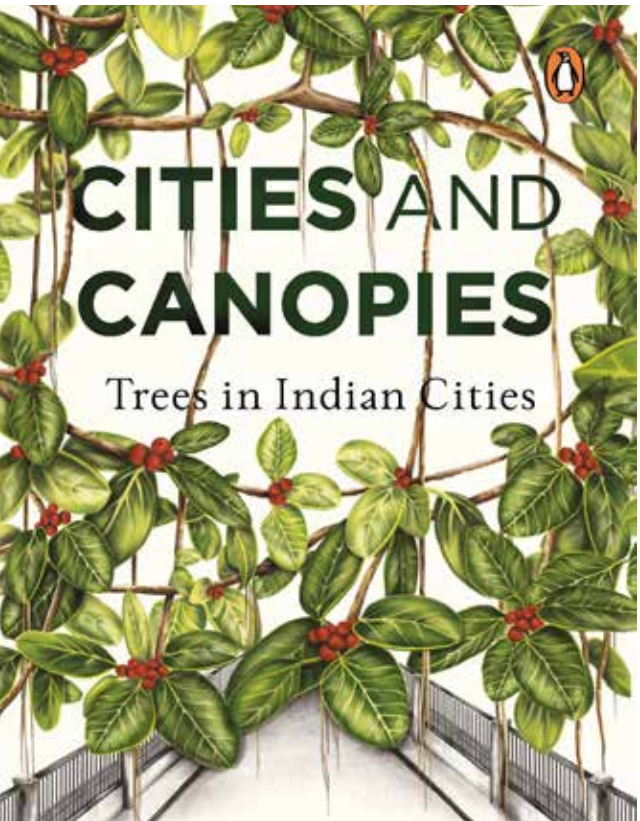
“Even plastic and glass must succumb to the ravages of time, light and atmosphere. There is no denying nature. It is not separate to supermarkets, motorways and car parks. It doesn't disappear when we tarmac it over. There is a creeping garden beneath us, seeking an opportunity to flourish in the cracks of things we build.”



Cities and Canopies:
Trees in Indian Cities

by Harini Nagendra and Seema Mundoli

Join Nagendra and Mundoli as they explore India's street trees. *Cities and Canopies* covers 10 different species of trees, with a chapter for each tree that goes into its history in the country, its role in the cultural life of the city, and the ways in which the tree has been utilised by people, from firewood, to food, to medicine—there are even recipes, riddles, and craft ideas to try. Each tree chapter alternates with a chapter exploring an interesting aspect of city trees, such as the way in which trees communicate, the role of trees in religion, the great native vs exotic debate, and the loss of urban groves. If you want to know more about India's city trees, this book is a great place to start.



Fantasy Farmer

Simone Martel



Simone Martel is the author of a novel, *A Cat Came Back*, a memoir, *The Expectant Gardener*, and a collection, *Exile's Garden*. She's a 4th generation Berkeleyn. According to her family, Simone was teargassed on her way to nursery school. She's working on a new novel set in the '60s.



During the long rainy winter and through the lush warm spring, tantalizing pictures of English flower gardens float through my imagination as I work in my garden. But in August and September, when the weather in the Bay Area grows hot, dry, and decidedly un-English, the flowers fade and the vegetables flourish. Then I pretend to be that ultra-American character: a farmer.

In late summer, while I am in my farmermode, my grandfather is my role model. He's the person I pretend to be when I'm out there with my cardboard box (no wicker basket or English-style trug for me) harvesting tomatoes. I picture my grandfather standing among his crops in his green cap and plaid shirt (with Vicks cough drops in the pocket). I remember his rolling walk, his quick sense of humor and his equally quick temper.

When I was kid, I used to look forward to visiting my grandfather's "farm." It lay on a narrow strip of land behind the apartment building in Oakland where he lived. For a few hours in the middle of the day the sun bore down between the walls of my grandparents' building and the one beyond. A concrete path bisected the long rectangular plot and on the path three battered folding chairs clustered around a coffee can filled with sand. People went there to smoke. Some years a pot of marigolds or rosemary might appear, but only my grandfather worked that land year after year. He tended that scrap of earth just as if he were still back in rural Idaho. He grew green beans and corn and radishes and squash, but tomatoes were his specialty.

I didn't visit my grandfather's garden very often. Every Sunday in summer, though, he visited us in Berkeley, bringing my parents and me bags of perfect round tomatoes he had picked green and ripened on the kitchen windowsill. He drove them over to us in his white pickup truck that was forever stalling in city traffic.

What did my grandmother do during those summers? I wondered one day, as I stood in the kitchen slicing tomatoes for the dehydrator. She didn't grow tomatoes; my grandfather wouldn't have let her. He considered growing vegetables to be man's work, like hunting and fishing. My grandmother hardly ever went out to the garden. She didn't go into the kitchen very often, either, for she wasn't much of a cook. She served my grandfather's tomatoes sliced, with white bread on the side. That was about it. She boiled the green beans and she boiled the corn.

My grandmother certainly didn't preserve or "put up". And so, though my grandfather is my role model for a farmer, I have to reach back beyond my personal history to find a prototype for my farmwife fantasies.

As I stand at the counter slicing those Early Girls for the drying rack, I think of Ma in the "Little House" books, or of a homesteader in a Willa Cather novel. I pretend to be one of those strong, hardworking pioneer women, preserving for the long winter.

All I'm doing, really, is filling an old mayonnaise jar with olive oil and dried tomatoes. The tomatoes will add zest to my husband's homemade pizzas, but won't contribute substantially to our winter diet. The fantasy of "putting up," however, is so rich for me, so evocative, I might as well be packing up bottles of preserves, filling the root cellar with carrots and potatoes, and hanging strings of onions in the attic. Though, of course, the cellar and attic exist only in my imagination.

Still, however much I may live in my head, I know my backyard vegetable garden is part of the larger world. And not only because of the crows swooping down to

eat cherries off my tree and flying away to squawk at passersby from the telephone wire. I know what I do on this little plot of land, I do to the world beyond my fence. So I garden organically. I encourage birds and bugs. I compost pulled-up plants, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds. I mulch and try not to use too much water.

My grandfather had an urban farm in Oakland long before it was chic. Now many backyards sport chicken coops and bee hives, and front yard vegetable gardens are no longer considered eyesores. I'm sure my grandfather never thought he was helping the environment by welcoming bees to his plants and earthworms to his soil. He might have said he grew vegetables to save money, but since he gave so much of it away to us, I suspect he also did it because he wanted to contribute.

I feel that way when I take my dad a bag of apples from my tree, although Berkeley is awash in organic produce these days. He tells me he'll make chutney with these, and I think: this year I'll try apple sauce, or apple butter—or cider. They're only Golden Delicious apples, not a fancy heirloom variety. But these apples were picked from a tree that shaded my kitchen on hot summer afternoons. I fed the apples my compost, now the apples feed me and my family, a few of them feed the squirrels, and they feed my imagination, too.





After Barry – A City Spared

Kristin Fouquet



Kristin Fouquet photographs and writes from lovely New Orleans. Her photography has been published in online journals and in print. She is the author of *Twenty Stories*, *Rampart & Toulouse*, *The Olive Stain*, *Surreptitiously Yours*, and *Surrendered Stories*. You are invited to her humble, virtual abode at the address <https://kristin.fouquet.cc>

New Orleans has always been vulnerable to hurricanes. Yet, the recent threat of Hurricane Barry invoked heightened anxiety for a city still recovering from widespread flooding due to a thunderstorm on July 10th, 2019. With the Mississippi River at its highest in years and the possibility of overtopping the levees, city officials ordered an unprecedented move in shutting all of the flood gates. Being on the east side of Barry meant water, not wind, would be the danger. Lack of faith in the pumping system prompted citizens to offer DIY sandbag stations. By Friday morning, July 12th, Tropical Storm Barry had strengthened in the Gulf of Mexico nearing the Louisiana coast. Many tourists and locals evacuated New Orleans. After Barry strengthened to a hurricane and made landfall on Saturday morning, we waited for the frightening rainfall predictions to come true. Heavy rain bands avoided the city. By Sunday evening, the flash flood watches and tornado warnings were lifted. The city had been spared.

On Monday morning, I ventured out to explore my neighborhood. Evidence of the preparedness was visible in the many sandbags piled in doorways. As I surveyed the minimal damage in the area, I felt my anxiety replaced by relief. New Orleans was beyond fortunate. Now, her citizens can relax until the next one.

LEFT: *Bagged*
NEXT PAGE, LEFT: *Battered Palm*
NEXT PAGE, RIGHT: *Be Safe*



FRIGIDAIRE

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Closed
Sat 15th
Dr
gate



ABOVE: Discarded Sandbags

RIGHT: Headline

NEXT PAGE, LEFT: Sacrifice

NEXT PAGE, RIGHT: Sandbar







LEFT: Rolled Rugs and Sandbags

ABOVE: Live Wire

BELOW: Torn Flag



Issue 3 – Sky

Issue 3 will explore the theme 'sky'. Whether it's light pollution, the weather, or bird flight, look up and tell us what you see. Have you experienced a fierce storm or stopped to appreciate a sunset over the city? Perhaps you've had the chance to witness the city from above, how did it shape the way you think about the city and nature? We can't wait to see what you do with this theme! The submission period for this issue is

1 December 2019 – 29 February 2020

Issue 4 – Fauna

Cities are becoming increasingly rich with animal life: rats, pigeons, sparrows, squirrels, and raccoons, but also peregrines, herons, coyotes, and bobcats. Whether you've come face-to-face with an urban animal, or simply seen evidence of its presence, we want to see your artwork and photography and read your stories! Although cities are often more accepting of their wild fauna, many are still seen as pests, we'd love to see submissions that explore the complexities of animals in the city. The submission period for this issue is

May 2020 – 31 July 2020

Submit here:

<http://stonecropreview.com/submissions/>

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