

WRITING HOME: THE POETRY OF DISPLACEMENT

“I hear it in the deep heart’s core,” writes the speaker of Yeats’s beloved poem, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” when conjuring a mental image of home.

For all the emotional weight it carries, home can be a startlingly ethereal thing. Home changes; it is lost, found; remnants of it circle through unfamiliar spaces; images of it surface in the mind. It is this transient quality that has prompted generations of poets to translate the experience of home into lines and words, to identify what, exactly, home is. While it might often become a means of exploring home, poetry is also deeply interconnected with home’s opposite: displacement.

The act of description necessarily implies distance. When we are fully present in a moment or feeling, we simply experience it, rather than attempting to describe, record, or understand. As soon as a poem begins to describe home, it leaves a record of the speaker’s displacement: the fact that the poet is writing about home implies that they are not fully present there. Rather, the poet is engaged in a kind of longing—because isn’t that what poetry is?—a kind of reaching towards the image of home.

The following poems dive into this home/displacement dynamic, exploring shifting borders and disappearing communities, the tension between actual and emotional homes, the lives of homeless citizens, home in the context of the family and the struggle of being unable to return to home, and the ability of home to bear witness to personal history. In their search to define home, these poems push the boundaries of mediums: Jennifer Hasegawa brings her work to life through video, and Ryan Clark conducts homophonic translations of anti-immigration bills and archival material. Both Clark and Alfredo Aguilar complicate home by exploring not only the emotional aspects of home, but also the conflicts imposed by nations and borders. Emilia Phillips and Marcus Amaker introduce the concept of the body as a home, whether through the lines, “I met myself again and again / in the mirror, which is the farthest distance one travels / without being with oneself,” or through a discussion of homelessness.

When considered in this historical moment, the poems take on additional weight, providing powerful commentaries on the unique meaning of home during a global pandemic. I encourage readers to consider both the personal engagements with and unique depictions of home in each poem, as well as the ways in which these perspectives shed light on the comforts and challenges of home during quarantine. While the act of description might imply distance, it can nevertheless bring us together through shared experience, at least for a moment, drawing us nearer to home “in the deep heart’s core.”

—Isabel Prioleau

Dr. Ryan Clark

3 poems from *Arizona SB 1070: An Act*

I. [eye]

II. [to]

XIV. [transfer]

5 poems from *Old Greer County*

Aaron School

I Can't Believe What Has Happened

No Place Like Texola
for Texola, Oklahoma

Ron
for Ron, Oklahoma

Russell
for Russell, Oklahoma

I. [eye] was published in Split Lip Magazine

II. [to] was published in HOLD

XIV. [transfer] was published in Barzakh

Aaron School was published in Yemassee

I Can't Believe What Has Happened and Russell were published in Parentheses

Ron was published in Ghost City Review

I.

[eye]

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

1 Be it a naked leg, a slow oar of dust taut over

2 Section 1. Intent

2 a canyon tent

3 The legislature finds that there is a compelling interest in the

3 the ledge where fingers map a line at rest in the

4 cooperative enforcement of federal immigration laws throughout all of

4 furtive calf muscle

5 Arizona. The legislature declares that the intent of this act is to make

5 ahead of the shak

6 attrition through enforcement the public policy of all state and local

6 ing train of a step of sandal

7 government agencies in Arizona. The provisions of this act are intended to

7 feet gaining Arizona the rough sun sanded sh

8 work together to discourage and deter the unlawful entry and presence of

8 ore where a scar in the earth hung law over a young presence of

9 aliens and economic activity by persons unlawfully present in the United

9 line and economic activity pressing on fully present in the untied d

10 States.

10 ust

11 Sec. 2. Title 11, chapter 7, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended by

11 as a wall of fence severs our vein a bea

12 adding article 8, to read:

12 ten river d

13 ARTICLE 8. ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION LAWS

13 rifting forward In a loss

14 11-1051. Cooperation and assistance in enforcement of

14 event everyone ends in a forced

15 immigration laws; indemnification

15 migration in wind and sun

16 A. NO OFFICIAL OR AGENCY OF THIS STATE OR A COUNTY, CITY, TOWN OR

16 and no safe water Skin n

17 OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THIS STATE MAY ADOPT A POLICY THAT LIMITS OR

17 ears a division of soil is IDd as a

18 RESTRICTS THE ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL IMMIGRATION LAWS TO LESS THAN THE FULL

18 restricted remainder All immigrants change

19 EXTENT PERMITTED BY FEDERAL LAW.

19 as entry touched a body raw

20 B. FOR ANY LAWFUL CONTACT MADE BY A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL OR AGENCY

20 Before any law is an act made by an arm an official one

21 OF THIS STATE OR A COUNTY, CITY, TOWN OR OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THIS

21 of a state a subdivision of us

22 STATE WHERE REASONABLE SUSPICION EXISTS THAT THE PERSON IS AN ALIEN WHO IS

22 as we are A wrist suspects it hears aliens is

23 UNLAWFULLY PRESENT IN THE UNITED STATES, A REASONABLE ATTEMPT SHALL BE MADE,

23 unafraid to say reasonable attempts shall be made t

24 WHEN PRACTICABLE, TO DETERMINE THE IMMIGRATION STATUS OF THE PERSON. THE

24 errorist to say blood determined the immigrant a soft person The

25 PERSON'S IMMIGRATION STATUS SHALL BE VERIFIED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

25 person is migration to us is all of our ID Our nomad

26 PURSUANT TO 8 UNITED STATES CODE SECTION 1373(c).

26 pursuit unites us centuries of our us

27 C. IF AN ALIEN WHO IS UNLAWFULLY PRESENT IN THE UNITED STATES IS

27 See aliens in love fully present in the untied status

28 CONVICTED OF A VIOLATION OF STATE OR LOCAL LAW, ON DISCHARGE FROM

28 of visit of voila tie it here localize here

29 IMPRISONMENT OR ASSESSMENT OF ANY FINE THAT IS IMPOSED, THE ALIEN SHALL BE

29 What is a native if the map said the line shall be

30 TRANSFERRED IMMEDIATELY TO THE CUSTODY OF THE UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION AND

30 transferred immediately to the west What hunted immigrant

31 CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT OR THE UNITED STATES CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION.

31 cuffs mean or the United States Customs and Border Protection

32 D. NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER LAW, A LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY MAY

32 Do not stand here Law will force again a m

33 SECURELY TRANSPORT AN ALIEN WHO IS UNLAWFULLY PRESENT IN THE UNITED STATES

33 arch or for an alien a ship Residents stay

34 AND WHO IS IN THE AGENCY'S CUSTODY TO A FEDERAL FACILITY IN THIS STATE OR TO

34 and watch as custody of a dry land is tor

35 ANY OTHER POINT OF TRANSFER INTO FEDERAL CUSTODY THAT IS OUTSIDE THE

35 n Others fear and fear the outside the

36 JURISDICTION OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.

36 jurisdiction fear seeing agents

37 E. A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, WITHOUT A WARRANT, MAY ARREST A PERSON

37 Alien is made to search where a person

38 IF THE OFFICER HAS PROBABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THE PERSON HAS COMMITTED

38 has probable cause to believe that fear is a home It

39 ANY PUBLIC OFFENSE THAT MAKES THE PERSON REMOVABLE FROM THE UNITED STATES.

39 pulls a fence that makes the fear a song of buffer around us

40 F. EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN FEDERAL LAW, OFFICIALS OR AGENCIES OF THIS

40 Fix us river Wash off this

41 STATE AND COUNTIES, CITIES, TOWNS AND OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS OF THIS

41 stain in the sand dry as a fish in a d

42 STATE MAY NOT BE PROHIBITED OR IN ANY WAY BE RESTRICTED FROM SENDING,

42 esert dry and restricted from sun

43 RECEIVING OR MAINTAINING INFORMATION RELATING TO THE IMMIGRATION STATUS OF

43 River remain in formation our linked migration a state of

44 ANY INDIVIDUAL OR EXCHANGING THAT INFORMATION WITH ANY OTHER FEDERAL, STATE

44 vital exchange of form a wide feral state

45 OR LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY FOR THE FOLLOWING OFFICIAL PURPOSES:

45 a river meant to flow across

II.

[to]

1 1. DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR ANY PUBLIC BENEFIT, SERVICE OR LICENSE

1 In the river public a knee fits surfing se

2 PROVIDED BY ANY FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL OR OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THIS

2 vered for a state clothed of visions

3 STATE.

3 shot

4 2. VERIFYING ANY CLAIM OF RESIDENCE OR DOMICILE IF DETERMINATION OF

4 over a fence slammed in yards of dirt in

5 RESIDENCE OR DOMICILE IS REQUIRED UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS STATE OR A JUDICIAL

5 desert Miles are acquired under the haze of feet toward a sh

6 ORDER ISSUED PURSUANT TO A CIVIL OR CRIMINAL PROCEEDING IN THIS STATE.

6 ore ears shut for sand Over a river even

7 3. CONFIRMING THE IDENTITY OF ANY PERSON WHO IS DETAINED.

7 a river is detained

8 4. IF THE PERSON IS AN ALIEN, DETERMINING WHETHER THE PERSON IS IN

8 if it is an alien dreaming where the person is i

9 COMPLIANCE WITH THE FEDERAL REGISTRATION LAWS PRESCRIBED BY TITLE II, CHAPTER

9 f a line is there As legs stretch on a low ripple hover

10 7 OF THE FEDERAL IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT.

10 s a veiny trail migrating gownlike

11 G. A PERSON MAY BRING AN ACTION IN SUPERIOR COURT TO CHALLENGE ANY

11 back toward the shall

12 OFFICIAL OR AGENCY OF THIS STATE OR A COUNTY, CITY, TOWN OR OTHER POLITICAL

12 ows This story through our political

13 SUBDIVISION OF THIS STATE THAT ADOPTS OR IMPLEMENTS A POLICY THAT LIMITS OR

13 division is a story of laments of limits

14 RESTRICTSTHEENFORCEMENTOFFEDERALIMMIGRATIONLAWSTOLESSTHANTHEFULL

14 Tired is the river migrating wheezing full

15 EXTENT PERMITTED BY FEDERAL LAW. IF THERE IS A JUDICIAL FINDING THAT AN

15 under a border just ink an

16 ENTITYHASVIOLATEDTHISSECTION,THECOURTSHALLORDERANYOFTHEFOLLOWING:

16 d a fence a rail or a door or a wall a line

17 1. THAT THE PERSON WHO BROUGHT THE ACTION RECOVER COURT COSTS AND

17 One thought our border a river shortened

18 ATTORNEY FEES.

18 to our knees

19 2. THAT THE ENTITY PAY A CIVIL PENALTY OF NOT LESS THAN ONE THOUSAND

19 at the end of a sea of pain This is in the sand

20 DOLLARSANDNOTMORETHANFIVETHOUSANDDOLLARSFOREACHDAYTHATTHEPOLICY

20 all our sand and more than enough sand each day shut off

21 HAS REMAINED IN EFFECT AFTER THE FILING OF AN ACTION PURSUANT TO THIS

21 A river flows in pursuit to di

22 SUBSECTION.

22 ssect

23 H. A COURT SHALL COLLECT THE CIVIL PENALTY PRESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION G

23 Here is elective alien Our script is subsection G

24 AND REMIT THE CIVIL PENALTY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY FOR DEPOSIT IN

24 And dream it the civil and the departmentalized the foreign

25 THE GANG AND IMMIGRATION INTELLIGENCE TEAM ENFORCEMENT MISSION FUND

25 the gang of immigrants a stream a song un

26 ESTABLISHED BY SECTION 41-1724.

26 established Bite down for it is a vein in the teeth

27 I. A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IS INDEMNIFIED BY THE LAW ENFORCEMENT

27 I love our cement rivers and

28 OFFICER'S AGENCY AGAINST REASONABLE COSTS AND EXPENSES, INCLUDING ATTORNEY

28 our age of reasonable costs and easiness I love our

29 FEES, INCURRED BY THE OFFICER IN CONNECTION WITH ANY ACTION, SUIT OR

29 signs read by our eyes And just near

30 PROCEEDING BROUGHT PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION TO WHICH THE OFFICER MAY BE A

30 our border is a sign which says *Here may be*

31 PARTY BY REASON OF THE OFFICER BEING OR HAVING BEEN A MEMBER OF THE LAW

31 *reason here in a river flow*

32 ENFORCEMENT AGENCY, EXCEPT IN RELATION TO MATTERS IN WHICH THE OFFICER IS

32 *ing from agencies in relation to ours* In here is

33 ADJUDGED TO HAVE ACTED IN BAD FAITH.

33 a judge of bad faith

34 J. THIS SECTION SHALL BE IMPLEMENTED IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH

34 Justice shall be planted in a ri

35 FEDERAL LAWS REGULATING IMMIGRATION, PROTECTING THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF ALL

35 ver swirling gyrating protecting us Evil are the

36 PERSONS AND RESPECTING THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF UNITED STATES

36 persons trespassing their evil legs and tongues unstate

37 CITIZENS

37 d eyes

38 Sec. 3. Title 13, chapter 15, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended by

38 Search the river in Arizona Revise its status amend it by

39 adding section 13-1509, to read:

39 adding a shot in the heart enough to tear

40 13-1509. Trespassing by illegal aliens; assessment; exception;

40 through nine trespassing illegals as one takes a pin

41 classification

41 classifying

42 A. IN ADDITION TO ANY VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW, A PERSON IS GUILTY OF

42 And in a violent river is a life

43 TRESPASSING IF THE PERSON IS BOTH:

43 trees pass a person in a boat

44 1. PRESENT ON ANY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE LAND IN THIS STATE.

44 nears shore a rough land In this state

45 2. IN VIOLATION OF 8 UNITED STATES CODE SECTION 1304(e) OR 1306(a).

45 in violation of states is our river or theirs

XIV.

[transfer]

1 B. In addition to any other requirement for an employer to receive an
1 In danger a car ran from Peoria Van
2 economic development incentive from a government entity, the employer shall
2 s sway off of Main St veer off onto the highway Shell
3 register with and participate in the e-verify program. Before receiving the
3 gas stations spit Chevys as even
4 economic development incentive, the employer shall provide proof to the
4 ing made a veil on the sand Feet move
5 government entity that the employer is registered with and is participating
5 forward shredded and stepping
6 in the e-verify program. If the government entity determines that the
6 In the heave of program of government entity drains shutt
7 employer is not complying with this subsection, the government entity shall
7 le Arizona a Mexican firesale
8 notify the employer by certified mail of the government entity's
8 Note the move for California the
9 determination of noncompliance and the employer's right to appeal the
9 drive of noncompliance And home flees right out the
10 determination. On a final determination of noncompliance, the employer shall
10 door Remaining in Arizona the police

11 repay all monies received as an economic development incentive to the

11 A pale moon receives no comedy of elopement scene of the

12 government entity within thirty days of the final determination. For the

12 virgin en route to a final land of

13 purposes of this subsection:

13 purpose This is subsection

14 1. "Economic development incentive" means any grant, loan or

14 one comedy of elopement scene of migrant on

15 performance-based incentive from any government entity that is awarded after

15 a fence scene of any cover that is awarded

16 September 30, 2008. Economic development incentive does not include any tax

16 Severed roots take off Land is seen to fall away as

17 provision under title 42 or 43.

17 if night drew a road a r

18 2. "Government entity" means this state and any political subdivision

18 iver and nothing In this state any light is a subdivision

19 of this state that receives and uses tax revenues.

19 of shade It receives dust as vans

20 C. Every three months the attorney general shall request from the

20 sever the road as the run of rails kiss the earth

21 United States department of homeland security a list of employers from this

21 A night state departs rides off a map away from this

22 state that are registered with the e-verify program. On receipt of the list

22 As day arrives dirt shivers off at the

23 of employers, the attorney general shall make the list available on the

23 border of knees legs shuffling on

24 attorney general's website.

24 churning west

25 Sec. 9. Section 28-3511, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to read:

25 easing south defeated The air of leaving Arizona of a state made to read

26 28-3511. Removal and immobilization or impoundment of vehicle

26 28 3511 Removal and mobilization air of the vehicle

27 A. A peace officer shall cause the removal and either immobilization

27 pulled over immobilized

28 or impoundment of a vehicle if the peace officer determines that a person is

28 Removal of face is native here

29 driving the vehicle while any of the following applies:

29 driving the vehicle away flowing al

30 1. The person's driving privilege is suspended or revoked for any

30 ong a road a river of ledge suspended for any

31 reason.

31 reason

32 2. The person has not ever been issued a valid driver license or

32 The reason has not ever been valid Driver scene

33 permit by this state and the person does not produce evidence of ever having

33 of fear Might bite the sand if just to save it to save a haven

34 a valid driver license or permit issued by another jurisdiction. This

34 of light Driver scene of missing where just a stone is

35 paragraph does not apply to the operation of an implement of husbandry.

35 A parade to Sonora shoving at the dir

36 3. The person is subject to an ignition interlock device requirement

36 t Return is subject to going into a wreck

37 pursuant to chapter 4 of this title and the person is operating a vehicle

37 Pursuit carved this land Bones appear in a vehicle

38 without a functioning certified ignition interlock device. This paragraph

38 white as sun scene of this paragraph

39 does not apply to a person operating an employer's vehicle or the operation

39 Is to fly away even a thing anymore if the raid

40 of a vehicle due to a substantial emergency as defined in section 28-1464.

40 of sanctuary shot out detours

41 4. THE PERSON IS IN VIOLATION OF A CRIMINAL OFFENSE AND IS

41 For the person flew over a fence and is

42 TRANSPORTING,MOVING,CONCEALING,HARBORINGORSHIELDINGORATTEMPTINGTO

42 transporting moving concealing harboring shielding or attempting to

43 TRANSPORT,MOVE,CONCEAL,HARBORORSHIELDANALIENINTHISSTATEINA

43 transport move harbor shield An alien in this state in a

44 VEHICLEIFTHEPERSONKNOWSORRECKLESSLYDISREGARDSTHEFACTTHATTHEALIEN

44 vehicle knows risk disregards it The fact that

45 HASCOMETO,HASENTEREDORREMAINSINTHEUNITEDSTATESINVIOLATIONOFLAW.

45 home is to remain in the hunted dust of violation

Aaron School

Aaron, you are a school drawn into order
before the border called you Oklahoma.

You are a sentence with falling syntax.
I can see what you are trying to say

but as you speak the rotten wood
passing glacial from your entrance

erases so much of your once coherent structure.
What wills your standing.

What hands have kept the regression
of dirt away for such years.

Aaron, the map fell before you
emptied your windows,

yet what you see is stuck with the dryness
you had learned to read in Texas.

Pushing toward you is the face of sky
demanding what height you offer

just inches weighted in stucco
over the stretching earth.

When the second of your final trace is named,
you are a leaving ringing your light into story.

I Can't Believe What Has Happened

This was the history of when and how the Vinson community and the Vinson School District all started and all went away, from the 1880s to 2005. I can't believe what has happened.

- JB & Oline Chambers, from a placard in the Harmon County Historical Museum, 2005

I begin to gather what the town knew and find this sand where families had lived in the vise that drought crushed down on the land. Our people filed out, turned their sixty acres into a road and a shrug. The movement between the future of five hundred farmers and their families moving to Vinson and the past of an emptied town is too fast to feel it all but in the hush of a cemetery, a noun for the face of what vanishes with a version of recall. Late the scene of hands feeling for the removal of cotton in the boll, everywhere the reach of cuts. *I don't know why, but we all began to stop.* Our sign is done, the fields back to wings of grass. The tough root of our lives fails to hold. All memory is a fitted hinge to what forfeited this whirl of light that I feed my own living into.

So much is seized by the dirt and moved into the earth that I forget to wonder what happened, like a butcher of years in the slaughterhouse of the past. Another faint shadow undead. *I can't believe what has happened.* A far-removed people have gone too far to need a way to return. I speak to a gone town receding toward the rocks: *I can't believe what has happened.* In our extinction full of time together looking back, what is Vinson but a thing lonesome and heartbreaking. Go into the farm and fix it to your tale of who you are, a romance come true. *We always wanted to leave some history.* But the vision never cemented, and time rains a soft, dull wash.

No Place Like Texola

for Texola, Oklahoma

*There's no other place
like this place
anywhere near this place
so this must be the place.*

-message written on the side of the last remaining bar in Texola, which had at one point been known informally as Beerola for the town's large number of bars, being just over the state line from a dry county in Texas

Texola winged it over and into the letters of the Texas-Oklahoma border,
a supply of room to the two states as forms, a wing each sign could retain.

Is the town a sidewalk or a curb,
and which survives the ruined root of US 66.

A crack is a line forging its emptiness in a surface stayed too long unneeded,
as a building will let its surface stay too long among weedlawn,
among ancient highways touching a route.

This is a way to call home historic,
to shut the eyes I-40 removed as bypass.

Time makes us ghost towns, though the road housed us as it could,
shone us as a jewell of bar dust full of wood and metal light.

Bypass the cemetery still only half-full,
& the thirty-seven who stay
to add their lines inside the fence mounting the hill
outside the wreath of fairly located bricks
and cars itching the grass.

A passing is a labor with engine.

Ron

for Ron, Oklahoma

Some locations grow
in a field with the cotton.

Ron never reached the railroad,
was not enough for a post office.

What is a community
upon such unsolid use.

If a school is a stem with leaves,
say this is the life that Ron continues as

after the children help pick
cotton for the year

and the fields trust in a kind of
death for awhile.

Use it to house
families in the sureness

a name means;
in this we secure our labor.

A mostly migrant Spanish tongue
weaves the place with the hum of work

to find a one-room apartment to accept
the sounds of life into a wall.

When no longer exists
the ceiling the walls

still stand to show what has
been abandoned in the field.

Once the farms have
been consolidated and

the hands have become metal
harvesters, the school is

a location standing empty, is
demolished by a tornado a year on.

Among the fields as remnant
are thick gray walls

to welcome the prairie
as a sign of end.

Russell

for Russell, Oklahoma

Sun drags down a road
the rub of evening, entrusts
with Russell a vast
film of darkness. So
into existence hundreds
of visitors become a
located mass of viewer.
All area the audience
surrounds is a core
fit inside of a Russell
serving the prairie with movies
at the first drive-in
Oklahoma felt flicker
in the summer dust.

Outside is a show we have
never had to vividly imagine;
outside is not a fantasy
ring of floodlights—
and yet here posted to
the night as a screen
is a story brought into us
from a far away light
shooting over our heads.
It has made a crowd
of a town stripped
of its post office,
worn of its time.

But with the verity of war,
what is audience but
a staring at each other
enlarged to mechanized
scale. So when the movies
ended, and Russell
faded again back into parts,
its few farmers watch
a scene of leaving
unfilmed for anyone.

Alfredo Aguilar

YELLOW HOUSE

MONARCAS

IT'S IN A COLLEGE CLASS THAT I FIRST LEARN ABOUT
FRIENDSHIP PARK—

YELLOW HOUSE was originally published in The Journal

MONARCAS was originally published in The Nashville Review

IT'S IN A COLLEGE CLASS THAT I FIRST LEARN ABOUT FRIENDSHIP PARK— was
originally published in The Common

YELLOW HOUSE

morning rose like a quiver of flutes. from my room:
a flagpole, a field of goldenrod, the mountains. i heard
door latches in the hallway click into place. i found you
kneeling at your bedside singing into the sheets, light splayed
on the floor. i lay on a couch playing a thumb piano.
you said that every time you looked out the window
you watched me wading into the flower fields unsure
if i would return. in the evening we stood at the edge
of a landscape & i wanted to bottle the dying light. you spoke
of your brother—the duty to family. being a first born,
i nodded. in that silence i could hear my own blood whistle—
so thin & distant from the soil where i stood. on the porch
you asked *who do you sing for?* & i didn't have an answer.
you said *i sing for the dead*—then looked at me—*you do too.*

MONARCAS

Every autumn, monarch butterflies migrate from the central U.S.
To the mountains in Michoacán. In March, their return North

Begins near the town where my father was born
And ends in the country I was birthed.

Along this route the monarchs rest on oak and pine,
But no individual butterfly ever completes the round trip.

While moving North, the monarchs lay their eggs.

The eggs hatch and they will, perhaps without realizing,
Finish a journey started by the generation before them.

//

No matter how long my parents have lived in the United States
They never think of themselves as Americans.

And I'm certain Americans don't think of them that way either.

Americans look at my face and think *Mexican*—

I don't think of myself as completely American and yet—
All the Mexicanos would call me *Americano*.

See that branch full of monarchs—That fluttering flock of orange—

Tell me—

Are they American-born or Mexican?

//

The monarchs' movement yields to no country—

Only to rest, milkweed, and a kind climate.

Michoacán has a sanctuary for the butterflies,
Where in February entire trees are covered in orange wings.

—People from over the world come to witness this wonder.

Science still can't agree on how the migration happens,
But some speculate it's genetic memory—

An inherited map passed down
From previous generations to find their way back.

//

Both my parents, like many other folks, say that someday
They'll return to their hometowns in México to stay.

With each passing year I find this less likely, bound
As they are to us children and the life they've made here.

When was the last time you went to México? my parents ask.

It's been years, I say.

For me, those older homes hold little to return to—
Both sets of grandparents gone—
Family members and a country that are distant to me.

You probably won't ever go back by yourself, huh? they ask.

//

Perhaps one day I will go back
If only to meet the migration of the monarchs for the first time.

To witness a sliver of that long journey,

Knowing the butterflies that return to this mountain
Next year won't be the ones I'm looking at now—

But the ones yet to be born.

Perhaps what I'm returning to isn't a place,
But a song passed down and buried within me.

Perhaps I have always carried
The words, the melody, the memory—

And have only to unearth it and grasp its music—
Here is the way back.

—Wherever I walk, I bring all who came before me.

IT'S IN A COLLEGE CLASS THAT I FIRST LEARN ABOUT FRIENDSHIP PARK—

A bi-national area along the San Diego/Tijuana border
That allows residents from both countries to meet.

I'm shown a photograph of the fence jutting out into the ocean and can never forget it.

In 2013—
Years after I first hear of the park, I drive out to see it.

At the time, I don't know that the park has been reopened since only last year—

That in 2009, the park was shut down
So that an outer parallel fence blocking the public could be built.

Nor do I know that until 1994—

Before the uproar in California about undocumented immigrants—
Before miles of border, that included the park, became militarized—

Only a simple barbed wire fence separated the two countries—
And anyone could meet there under the watch of the Border Patrol.

But I do know that every Sunday near noon a mass is held there.

I leave my car in the larger state park and walk toward the beach
Where the fence rests.

Along the way I see two idling Border Patrol vans.

I see the ocean first and in the distance I can make out the faint silhouette of an island.
I reach the beach and feel the sand give way underneath my feet.

I turn to face south and there—The metal fence jutting up from the landscape, into the sky.

I walk toward it, look east, and watch how it lengthens into the land
Far beyond what I can see or know.

I notice the outer fence is open but guarded—

I later learn the Border Patrol allows people into
This space between for only a few hours—

I walk past the officers and their vans, past the open gate
And behind the fence stands another fence—

Rust covered, taller, more densely braided—
Stretching out into the surf separating even the water.

All the while cameras and officers clad in green survey us.

I glimpse people on the other side moving freely—

They lay out towels on a beach, enjoy meals at restaurants,
Come as close to the fence as they choose.

On this side I watch a man speak through the fence with a woman and child—
Their fingertips barely touching between tight thin rails.

At the wall a priest dressed in white holds mass for both countries—

Dios, ruega por nosotros—

On the other side a person's face I can hardly make out asks me—

Are you looking for someone?

I'm fortunate—
I say—No.

The priest ends his service, prays for families, for laws to change—

Vayamos en paz—

Through the fence I can see the white obelisk—
The marker that begins a line dividing the two countries.

I know our writing—Our pleading with the world
Is not enough to undo a history of acts—

I look west, to the falling ocean—

It knows nothing about what we do to one another or the lines we carve into the land.

I watch the waves—

They come to rest on the same shore that answers to two different names—

The waves begin in a place without nations—

They rise and reach towards me—

Then a metal line breaks them in two.

Marcus Amaker

ambient noise

ambient noise

written by Marcus Amaker, Poet Laureate of Charleston, SC and Gaillard Center artist-in-residence

at sunrise,
street sweepers
silence the ringing filth
of a late night's vibrato. in

the sneaky hours of the morning,
empty bottles and parking spaces
form a hushed choir, a
privileged quiet, a soundtrack

to the aftermath of the discord
that comes with alcohol. before noon,

the homeless are a cappella,
writing songs and signs
that read,

*"All I want is a joyful duet.
A movement instead of an elegy."*

at sunset,
pandemonium presses play
and the chaos loops again.

Jennifer Hasegawa

21st Century Travel

To Anyone Who Can't Get Home
Including Natives, Immigrants, and Extraterrestrials

This Love Like a Rock

The Hanuman Threshold
For Calculating Distances Without Physical Measure

(F)laws

Ode to Pepe'ekeo Mill Camp

5 Poems from Old Greer County

[Please click on titles to view video poems]

21st Century Travel

We loaded the children
into capsules and shot them
into space.

They didn't have a chance
to learn their own names
before we had them holding
their stories in white plastic bags.

**THANK YOU
THANK YOU
THANK YOU
THANK YOU
THANK YOU**

Featherless migrations
follow environmental triggers, too:

Days to live
grow shorter.

Fluctuating temperatures signal
mass graves nearby.

Water begins to flow
yellow.

In a tent
on the tip of a screw,
children eat
3 meals a day,
awaiting take-off.

They aren't hungry now,
but in a few years,
someone will need to teach them
how to smile.

Wash your face.
Eat this bread.

Do your best
to be credible:

Tell me
what you're afraid of
and maybe
we'll let you in.

○

My bones
tell time.

My blood
drips pyramids.

Your fear
wants walls:

Tell me
what you're afraid of
and maybe
you'll find your way home.

To Anyone Who Can't Get Home

Including Natives, Immigrants, and Extraterrestrials

The false harbor of home:
washed ashore and alien
again.

*This belongs to you.
It does not belong to me.*

Before: the steamship
that delivered great-grandX.

Before: the brigantine
that brought coffee and the first Bible.

Before: the double-hulled canoe
that arrived to find it was not the first.

Slice the water:
the instinct to take up space.

Trace the trajectory:
the instinct to connect points.

From *Hawaiki*,
the place from which we came
and the place we will call home
when we die—back to Babylon,
where there was a tower built
by people speaking a common language.

From the urge to remember
and be remembered—
the *confundation* of language and meaning:
agents of the first
and eternal voyage away.

In darkness,
we pluck the gourd
from which we fling
pulp and seeds into light.

From the bloody mouth
and the destroyer,
we pluck
calamondin thimbleberry mountain apple
and delight
when we mistake the red fur of the tree fern
for a wild boar.

Every birth
is an act of colonization:
mongoose
born to mouse
born to grain.

In defense, we leave places
in exactness:
a typewriter on a desk,
chicken bones in a sink,
an empty bottle of perfume
on a nightstand.

But return
and return again
to these places
only to find ghosts
clicking keys,
touching bones,
and inhaling the last traces
of home.

This Love Like a Rock

My dad hauled home
a beautiful rock. It was three-feet tall
and pocked like a wild sponge.

When it rained, water pooled
in the top pocks and cascaded down
to fill the lower pocks.

He told my mom,
“*Pele* made em jus fo you, honey!”
She said, “Fairy tales.”

The rock started making
its own water. I monitored it as it
slowly circled our house.

He ate some bad *opihī* (*auwe!*)
and was writhing in bed for days
as red moss crept across the rock.

Back at work, a boulder toppled
from the trench of a bulldozer
and caught his leg.

Earthbound meteor left a gash
in his shin. Blood pooled in the top pocks
and cascaded down to fill the lower pocks.

He hobbled out the front door,
gently tucked the rock into the bed of his truck
and we headed for Volcano town.

He returned it
to the grove of *ōhi'a lehua*
where he found it.
My father stared at his battered leg
and I worried that the rock would be
there waiting when we got home.

We listened to the urgent trill of the *i'iwi*,

dipping its beak into the nectaries of the forest,
our pores wide open
and taking in
our own sweet medicine.

The Hanuman Threshold

For Calculating Distances Without Physical Measure

Packs of lean girls lope
by. The gym teacher throws
his stopwatch at me.

I am walking around the track,
but in my mind, I am running:
running off the track
and up Kawili Street.

I pick up speed
down Komohana Avenue
with its rich-people houses
hidden behind monstera
and African tulip.

Up past Rainbow Falls,
I hear the ghosts of sovereignty
whistling for my attention.

I make the slow ascent
past the hospital
where we were all born
and where all of our mothers
will take their last good looks
up at our faces.

I run across the summit
of a dormant volcano,
and leap into the Pacific.
I am headed for India,
where I will hop trains
from Amritsar to Chennai.

On a train to Delhi,
with the doors wide open,
there is no difference
between inside
and outside.

I smell shit,
strawberries on the brink,
cut grass,
and dinners being made
in houses down the street
from everywhere.

I sway between two boys
picking at the ends of my scarf.
Their fingers invented touch
a million years ago,
but today they feel like newborn
hummingbirds.

I hold their hands in the temple
and as we pass through metal detectors
to enter the movie palace
where Aishwarya Rai will pump her shoulders
to conjure magic.

Bulldozer sifts through
a mound of garbage on the street;
unearths my missing heart
months after I've already left.

Hummingbird boys
grab it and run across traffic
miles deep. Crossing states,
they slow in Jaipur,
where they are showered
with curtains of lacquer bangles.

Heading south,
they take jobs as Mumbai dabbawallas,
delivering thousands of tiffins
without letter or number, and only color.

Pockets lined with cash,
they head to Goa,
where they gorge on fish curry rice
and collect bags of cashews
under the cover of night.

They hop on a barge
moving down River Mandovi,
carrying iron to seaworthy ships
at the Vasco de Gama docks,
ready for their journey
through the Arabian Sea
and on to Japan.

Docked in Kobe,
the boys shimmy into the lifeboats
of the Taisei Maru,
steadying itself
for its voyage to Hawai'i.

I see their oil-slicked heads of hair
bobbing in the distance.
Riding giant trevallies,
they raise my beating heart,
signaling like a buoy.

(F)laws

He glowed wonder when
he saw the ground giving them
up. Waxy skins peeled

back, revealing brown
gleaming in borderlands sun.
He thumped the globes for

answers; heard rustling
in low-hanging mesquite and
in the stillness in

between leaves lowed the
hearts' acknowledgment. For this,
he thanked, grasped, and plucked,

in a good way. So
happy he would have floated
off if the antler

palm hadn't snared his
shoelace and escorted him
back to his truck. At

checkpoint, uniforms
smashed every one with hammers,
looking for kilos

of cocaine growing
in gourds. Flaws in the mind are
replicated on

the land. Skins cracked, seeds
shivering. Flaws in the mind
are replicated

on the body. Guard
said *Stop your crying. It's just
gourds*. He said *These are*

the hearts of the deer.

Bodies poised and muscular,
listen for them come

for you in the night.

Metal totem whirring with
the flawed focusing

of glass eyes upon

*you so accustomed to the
sound of surveillance*

you suspect it is

the tune of existence.

Thump. Trump. Thump. This is

the sound of velvet

grazing against fresh concrete.

2,000 miles, bleeding.

Ode to Pepe'ekeo Mill Camp

Grandma's house is held
together by a dozen rusty nails
and inhabited
by colonies of wild cane.

The front door
is covered in lichen,
growing in patterns
that type out essays
on forgetting.

The road to her house
crumbles at the edges
and is split down the center.

I scan the land
for a shred of aloha
fabric from grandma's rag mop
or a shard of the tin roof
that banged out bossa novas
in rain storms.

In the sting
of cane arrow
against heart,
I see her stepping
into the raging overgrowth,
her gray polyester dress
hiked above her wrinkled knees;

Moving farther into the breach,
deeper into the gulch of time,
where will she emerge?

Emilia Phillips

The Cast, In Order of Appearance

THE CAST, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

First it was the midwife whom my father gave a dozen red roses.
And then it was my mother whom my father gave a rootball
azalea and a shovel.

And then it was my father, with his faint mustache that wouldn't grow.
And then there were the open-faced grandparents, like two sandwiches
sliced in half. Things were neat then. No one broke

character or diverged from the script.

And then it was the anonymity of strangers, always present. The family
dog, Rocky the cocker who died in the snow.

There had been a cat with my name years before.
But what is legacy to the world's new?

Then there were voices on the radio, the ones for music
and the ones for crime. On the latter, sometimes my father, named *490*.

Then there were other children, some to whom I was related and others I knew
I could kiss, when we got old enough. But I always preferred
their parents, the shock I hadn't always been

alive. Every now and then,
there was the great aunt who smashed ceramic angels

with a hammer and baked them into the Christmas
dressing. Someone's tooth chipped. Someone wore too much red
lipstick that smeared on their smile.

There were those who I later found out weren't real

even if I kept them alive. Then there was the brother who was buried
in his last Halloween costume—Superman.

At some point, love

interests entered. Mostly red
herrings. To forget them, I opened books and saw some ageless
faces. I met myself again and again

in the mirror, which is the farthest distance one travels

without being with oneself. I wrote obituaries and copied recipes.
I wrote a song in a dream
I later forgot. I wrote love letters sodden with my humid

internal weather, but I never met the postman

at whom the dog barks from the window. I try to keep the curtains
drawn against the sun, and the door? Most of the time I don't answer,
even when there's a knock.