


Please cite the Published Version

Solie, Karen  (2020) "After the Workers Are Welcomed Home". NUVO (86). p. 69. ISSN 1490-6589

Publisher: NUVO Magazine, Vancouver, Canada

Version: Published Version

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/626430/>

Usage rights:  In Copyright

Additional Information: This is an Open Access article published in NUVO published by Nuvo-Magazine, copyright The Author(s).

Enquiries:

If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

POEMS FROM ISOLATION

As the world came to a standstill, businesses shuttered and quarantine enforced, NUVO asked five poets to respond to the pandemic the best way they know how: in words. These poems, song to life and antidote to despair, are woven to illustrate the collective loneliness and uncertainty of the times.

Illustrator
Makoto Chi



By Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Naawakwe

there is lake
melting and
reforming
the idea of lonely

there are fires
smoke from burning sage
finches at the window
grey day after grey day

there are endless hours
marked by leaks
trout lilies
cedar

there is contraction
a pulling back
into
only

most of what happens,
happens again.

at the stopping place
there is fasting
expanse
an escape of one's form

there is a heartbeat
and a song
lying flat out
on the rocks

there are five-lined skinks
woodpeckers
intellect
laid bare

there is a quiet
a pulling back
into
only

most of what happens,
happens again.

By Karen Solie

After the Workers Are Welcomed Home

When the neighbourhood goes quiet as the country
Ambulances uneasy in the ambulance houses

Then memory is the bat pulled from under the bed
And swung wildly, with zero technique
So contact is felt as pain in the hands

Sentimental heirlooms crashing down
The tool become a weapon, like the economy.

Time now to acknowledge historic cruelties
Levied by or against you: it's like cutting
Your thumb off for eternity with the table saw

A machine so dangerous it has its own branch of
Litigation. To achieve proficiency
In a confined space is difficult, a demanding series

Of controlled movements is required to navigate
The land of the dead, the terrible land
Of known outcomes. Why go there?

To hear the sandhill cranes.
To walk around the lake with Mum and Dad again.

By Adèle Barclay

I Lost My Metaphors When She Died

I lost my metaphors when she died
and had to replace them
with analogies for how I couldn't breathe
while breathing

*

the virus could be an allegory
but it begets its own grief
and trains the body to attack its lungs

*

either way
coral reef
mangroves
have felt this betrayal before

*

an organism is and isn't an ecosystem
depending on how you want to visualize
high-school biology

I remember trying to overlay
each unit of life unfurling
across the scale:

DNA, nucleus, cell,
organ, systems, organism,
species, ecosystem, biosphere—
a congruent structure in theory

*

at the environmental museum
we used a giant Jenga block tower
to communicate the concept of biodiversity
slowly pulling away blocks representing various species
until the tower tumbled and smashed to the floor

*

trauma is relational
and therefore, must be healed in relation
but the trauma makes being relational
unbearable

*

which conditions are lying
under which conditions

*



which conditions are tidal

*

the TED Talk speaker on YouTube
calls child abuse a pandemic
we're all too implicated in
to openly acknowledge

*

I didn't know she'd die by suicide
but I knew the conditions
in which we developed were impossible

*

that feeling of helplessness is anger

*

when my body turns to face her
and she is no longer there

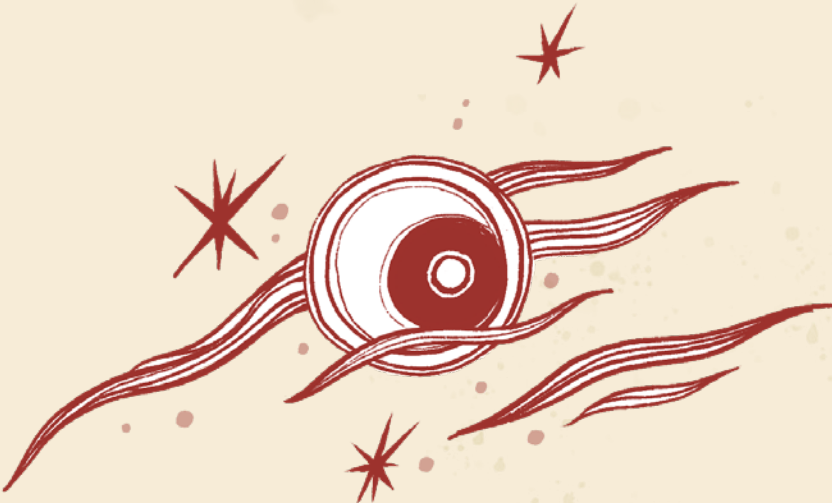
—

Some Day in April

after John Wieners

A poem can lie
when it needs to
glamour this life

each window
a law bent
to the hour



By **Ken Babstock**

Three Skulls on a Patterned Carpet

We shine at these blunt recycled
mornings, vinegar on the brush
bristles, astringence, self-denial,

the light’s hymnal or scorpion finds
us mumbling to an associate,
in our cell, on our terms, making

our outsider art—though in
the minds of the churlish, our
knowing the term should exclude

us. Let them exclude us. We touch
our common parts, naming
as we go; sternum, lobe, eczema,

crotch, imagining life on a beach,
paddling this side of the buoy
line, the young with their pails

and their fat divers’ watches,
the cloisonné of the far Labrador
shore someone’s catafalque

through ice crystal and low fog.
Dried capelin that smell of hibiscus
and mown grass, nitroglycerin,

deer spray, and penance.
Tuesdays we hang from a hook
he set into the ceiling beam,

dangle and sing, cross-hatched by
window-grate shadow. Our rib-caged
nightmares offset the pleurisy,

the inhalations, the raspy laughter
at the pale day moon. He found
me here on my own, back before

everyone’s longliner converted to
crabbing and commodities futures
was a thing. “We need not be real,”

he’d said, “neither of us. No one’s
forcing the blood round our circuit.”
I told him I’d never been strong

on narrative structure. You won’t need
that here, he assured me, “no event
can arise between two cancellations—

it’s like putting Time up for winter
in jars with the rabbit and jams.
Trust me, you’re no longer named or

believed. The reverb’s turned way up.”

By **Maria Borio**

Nel deserto rosso

In un sonno lunghissimo, mentre il silenzio intorno
alla zona rossa si allarga, ho sognato di essere un delfino
che risaliva il Rio delle Amazzoni, entrava in una vena
segreta e alla bocca del Tevere tornava, affondava, apriva
le onde nell’Hudson, nel Reno roteava. La sorgente
del Tamigi e la baia di Wellington erano affluenti,
di corso in corso la forza del mare si allenava,
il Fiume Giallo riscaldava la Neva, e su zattere di pino
i morti scomparivano, nudi, e sentivo freddo ma c’erano
le stelle, perché nello spazio bruciano ma non riscaldano,
e potevo toccarle senza morire. Ho sognato tanti corpi,
i codici, i caratteri, la logica del profitto ancora impressi
nelle rughe. Poi c’era una cosa più lontana, una scintilla,
un lampo, un sogno lucido: il cambiamento? Il delfino salta
molto più del perimetro di una zattera, ogni secondo.

Translated from Italian

In the red desert

In the longest sleep, with the surrounding silence of
the red zone expanding, I dreamt of being a dolphin
upstream the Amazon River, entering a secret vein
at the Tiber’s mouth, sinking, I open
the waves of the Hudson, spinning the Rhine. The source
of the Thames and the Bay of Wellington were tributaries,
the patterning pattern of the sea training itself,
the Yellow River re-exciting the Neva, and on pine rafts
the naked dead disappeared, and I was cold despite
the stars, because in space they burn without warming,
not deadly to the touch. I dreamt of so many bodies,
the codes, the characters, the logic of profit impressed
as wrinkles. Then there was a thing in the distance, a spark,
a streak, a lucid dream: the change? Every second the dolphin
jumps much higher than the perimeter of a raft.