

New Poetry by Maurice Decaul



U S Grant on the Disbanding of the Iraqi Army

I heard thunder in the mountains
witnessed soft amber lightening in the clouds
saw in the saplings, & yearling whitetail, promise.

When I reached out to take Lee's hand
to shake, I noticed also, the newness of his uniform
recognized that my own had been caked by
mud & dirt from my ride, & knew then
those questions which had kept me awake
the awful headaches which
overtook me, were for naught.

We had achieved our grand strategy
while in Richmond, the opponent was mired in tactics.

Magnanimity & benevolence being
my best & softest weapons
I applied them aggressively & fed
those desperate men, twenty-five-thousand
meals. I pardoned them & let them keep
hold of their horses therefore denying
them any excuse to develop into a resistance.

This I did in prudence
not wanting to ask the great General to surrender
instead providing him a means
to retire his army from the battlefield, with dignity.

Blue Ridges

Virginia moon, like a wet breast of an old lover
firm like an unripe doughnut peach, has been playing

hide & come find me with clouds & shadows.
On the night highway, road signs like

men in robes, guard rails like teeth or head stones
deer with their headlights look, stand poised

& ready for martyrdom.

Rain clouds blacken the sky; after it rains, Sairan

give the mountains their name. A blue heron lifts its wings.
Southern faces carry confederate residue

like a disaster or a nude woman, I stare.
When is a plantation no longer a plantation?

On the lake shore, with nutria, turtles, brown recluse
& copperheads, I know, I know these waters.

The small voice in my head says leap
it says, these waters will mask your smell.

How will I live here, in the south?
When my belly warns me, be home by dark.

Charlottesville

A woman sits next to me on the bus
I have nothing to say so I look out the window
& I think, if this was a generation ago

& I chose to ignore or respond to this lady's
entreaties, I might've become like strange fruit
ripening in a southern summer.

I want to throw up.

A brochure reminds those of us unfamiliar
in its quaint, elegant way, that "you" are now
in the rural south where respect & gentility...

I hope this woman doesn't expect a toothy smile
or a chortle, or that I will step off the sidewalk
or keep on listening to her go on & on.

Aleluya

Flocks of birds, explode like atoms;
cottontails, in coyote scat.

Climate

In the market, we look past each other
even as we both reach for strawberries
Excuse, me.
, excuse me.

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I have a habit of biting my nails.
I fear being bitten by water moccasins.
I dread country roads during new moons.
Last night, I mistook, the whitetail, for spirits.

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During afternoon rumbling
wind shouting through fractures in stone
like an invocation from the dead
for hemlocks to sacrifice their branches.

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Slaves' tears fall from heaven, floods
our plantation, loosens clay, rounds out pebbles.

Photo Credit: Matthew Brady