



W&M ScholarWorks

Undergraduate Honors Theses

Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects

4-2019

Billy's Burg: Investigating Colonial and Capitalist Constructions through Poetry

Ryan Onders

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorsthesis>

 Part of the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Onders, Ryan, "Billy's Burg: Investigating Colonial and Capitalist Constructions through Poetry" (2019). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 1342.
<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorsthesis/1342>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

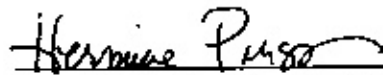
Billy's Burg: Investigating Colonial and Capitalist Constructions through Poetry

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from
The College of William and Mary**

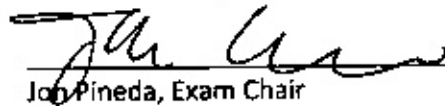
by

Ryan Onders

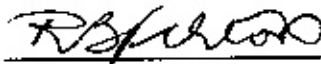
Accepted for Honors



Hermine Pinson, Thesis Advisor



Jon Pineda, Exam Chair



R. Benedito Ferrão



Jonathan Glasser

Williamsburg, VA

April 22, 2019

Layers of Swamp

Preface:

This book started as an attempt to comprehend the surreal colonial world I'm suspended in in corporate constructed Williamsburg, Virginia. The tool I have to do this is language. Though the English language inscribes a certain linear logic and rational causality that mean it may not be the best tool for the job, especially tricky in narrative or essay forms. In poetry, I found a wider array of possible relations to be depicted less limited by linear time or hierarchical causal relationships and more closely approximating the rhizomatic/relational nature of existence as described by Édouard Glissant, Inger Christensen, Peter Blue Cloud, Anna Tsing and other anthropologists, physicists and biologists, the bacteria in our bellies, etc. etc.

Drawing on William Carlos Williams' search for the American idiom in *Paterson*, *Layers of Swamp* is an experiment in trying to find a language that embodies a relational ontological perspective. It is an effort, in the sense of Heriberto Yépez's "Ethopoetics," at a "new-making of oneself," through the enactment of process towards the making of a poem that brings into existence new ways of being. Similar to Fanon's revolutionary transformation of consciousness, this depends upon direct action on and off the page. The four sections of the work offer different attempts at such a transformation.

Including those authors mentioned above, other influences include: Amiri Baraka, Aimé Césaire, Allen Ginsberg, Joy Harjo, Pablo Neruda, Charles Olson, Jerome Rothenberg, Gary Snyder, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko. A more complete list is at the end of the book.

Table of Contents

<u>Preface</u>	4
<u>Pete’s Past</u>	8
Pete’s Sunday Hymn.....	10
Time’s Tear.....	11
still.....	13
life the eternal.....	15
Don’t Kiss the Alpaca Lips Pt. I.....	17
Birth.....	19
Don’t Kiss the Alpaca Lips Pt. II.....	22
wonder.....	24
Don’t Kiss the Alpaca Lips Pt. III.....	26
Don’t Kiss the Alpaca Lips Pt. IV.....	27
The Parakeet’s Song.....	29
<u>The Tales of Sal Salamander at Tarpington Heights</u>	30
tree huggers and sitters.....	32
The Real Work.....	33
I’m Sal”	34
How to Balance.....	35
“from some other cause”	36
Winterizing.....	37
“Now some may say”	38
Ye Ol’ Limerick of Sal.....	39
“Another common question”	40
The Neighborhood.....	41
Tree Climbing.....	42
First Will and Testament.....	43
Shedding.....	44
Author’s Note.....	47
<u>Billy’s Burg</u>	48
dreams not fully your own.....	50
unrevised.....	52
“follow the”	53
Billy’s Burg.....	55
<u>thundercloud communication</u>	60
“bright green nails painted”	62
Redcoats.....	63
Manifesto.....	67

(r)evolution.....	68
allies.....	69
grass.....	70
but while I dream.....	72
The End of The Anthropocene, Please.....	73
revolutionary poetry.....	74
min(e)d matter.....	76
waste.....	77
stream samples.....	78
New Jersey Poem.....	79
frenzied feeding.....	80
dreams long.....	81
the birds and the bees.....	82
To a Telephone Pole on the Outside of an Icy Corner.....	84
eco-therapy.....	85
what penumbras?	86
No Dictators in the Assemblage.....	87
<u>Acknowledgments</u>	89
<u>Bibliographic Notes</u>	90
<u>A Book List</u>	91

Pete's Past

Pete's Sunday Hymn

Pete the petal peddler pedals
buysicle to sell suckle and sweets
swap Sam for a peach and pedal
on home from the farmers market
where even the local prison displays
slave made tables and benches

standing next to sitting Syd the
cigarette salesman says cigs
make friends findable follow
scent of smoke to they who say

no I wouldn't mind not living long
but I would mind not living so
spark up a light and strike up a song!

(Pete plucks strings and sings)

there was a Time my Mind had Wings!
my bahhdee climbed and climbed!
up trech'ress slopes gripping hopes!
of finding my Flying Mind!

Oh, I ran and ran chasing my Mind
holding hope my way to cope
and sooo I nehhver die! and they call me!
they clock me!

Time...

Time's Tear

a tear in my foot

plantar

pop

from an achilles

tied too taut

internally audible

pop

plucks tendons

bursts veins that swell

a little skip hop after sitting

the only cool down for the

running away from racing days

the next morning from the pain

tried running anyway twisting

trails through woods head down

the pack strung single file

each

stride

for

nine

miles

knife

jab

in the sole

severed

fascia

and

a

mind

fleeing

can't run faster than the feet

who keep it slowed slowed

severed

Time still
rhythm

had a rhyme and a
for sure
fish are
swimming
with fins

ripped
off

suburban bushes
blooming with
tops
trimmed

off

a little skip hop after sitting
the only cool down for the
running away from racing days

still

temporal activities
concluded
i vibrates humm
ing bird in the new
slow e s s

students swim to class through the bog
dogs find new ways to smell each other
(‘s rear ends)
hormonal particulates hang
visible pearls plucked by
the tongue

chatter from cities of pine needles overwhelmed
the wind plays dead

birds pump hard
through the dense
stick
to perch relieved they are
too light to fall

tired (of)
running cherishing
a calming breath of Now
Time

waits

in the Meadow

face face
ing Sky i
dreams
to be heard
Rock Giant
“tell me—“

the whisper wiggles

up

a crack reverberating

The Rock shifts

shrugs

words

fall

slowly slowly

frozen on the ground they

SCREAM underfoot

the same repeated phrase is inching its way unreceived across the Grand Canyon
but anxious life is

anxious life is

is more like to respond

ants crawl up my leg

to burrow safe in the folds of

Now researchers at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Albuquerque have identified areas in the brain responsible for perceiving the passage of time in order to carry out critical everyday functions. Their study is the first to demonstrate that the basal ganglia located deep within the base of the brain, and the parietal lobe located on the surface of the right side of the brain, are critical for

this time

anxious life is

making eye contact with deer

deer nodded twice to me and

once in reply i

anxious have

(conversations daily with)

life the eternal

wonder of life like
eternally wondering

wow
how
do

vines

grow like

that

leaved limbs limber

lean over fence to

full face take

sun

the life eternal

wonder of life like
wondering eternally
which insect might
have munched these
holes in these
leaves please don't
be mad mom if it's
more moths must
've needed more wool
well we'll need more
will when we fight
or maybe we might oh!

look a new leaf the life
eternal to feed if it
weren't for the greed
and all the infernal
concrete (internally I'm
wondering

wow
how
do

minds

go like that

limber leaf left

leaves for family

fallen face it

son

life's not eternal

(but I wonder)

*Time, having never had to die,
thinks that they are friends
with the guy. More to the plot
than Time could see until the
tear and the trauma brought
Time to pass as Pete, who sings
the secrets in song!*

Don't Kiss the Alpaca Lips

after "Sneakers" by Howard Finster

so

here's how it all began:

Life and Death left holdings hands
Sixthday night un-planned after God
got too drunk too early forgetting
Creation is some thirsty business

Old fella hazed the next day in
bed and called it rest saying he'd
done his best but his hungover
mind forgot to create Time!

Without that pressing thing
pestering Life and Death left
for a long honeymoon to Earth
Love kept them together

"Dr. Phyllis Love,
metaphysical counselor,
here to help you relate,
you say you two
got hitched without even a date
must be something strong, so what's wrong?

"That 'God' guy is crazy!" says Death
"He's tryna rope me into some
'Alpaca lips' business?"

"Says it's *our* fault that *he* forgot about Time
so now *we* need to 'enforcit'
or he'll make *everybody* kiss an alpaca on the mouth!

"Oh and he really don't like that you're down
here helping humans Love..."

Love hurts at that and snaps back

"luckier to have not gotten lucky
at God's party
there's always strings attached

with that guy
that don't fly with Life who replies

"well what do we have to do
to create Time?

"it'll make a forever
for us to stay together

Death, ever wise:

"forever I'll remember your lips
as the last I kissed not some damn alpaca

"I'll take God's job offer down south
visit you every day

"hide from God's eyes in some animal disguise
we'll meet discrete a thousand times a week

Love and Death left together
Life stayed behind
in this plot, they
birthed Time

Birth

after Allen Ginsberg

America won't write my poem until
I'm in my right mind

America

I was born six months ago on the fake leather driver seat of a Ford Focus
then drove six hours in the wrong direction
I'm not a man I cried when I was born
Umbilical fluid from my bee mother blurring full grown infant eyes
I came to at the gas station at the end of the highway
Valdez I wasn't supposed to make it to you
Valdez I wasn't supposed to see
how do waterfalls freeze?

America I saw mountains the moment I was born
I didn't know better I thought the tops of the mountains were clouds
America the mountains go past the clouds
Infant fantasies I saw myself wading in clouds trudging through snow
I hug the top of Mount Wrangell and call it by its name
K'elt'aeni the one that controls the weather

America I was three hours old when
I met a god on the land you claim America

America are we all Gods?

America I'm in my right mind now

America

I rode on the back of a mosquito to the village Old Harbor on Kodiak Island
The mosquito touched down on the blood rich ground
across the bay is Massacre Island where the ghosts of fleeing Aluutiq find form
in brown bears you can trace the wandering paths they take through the bush
on the land you claim America

I keep seeing ghosts on the land you claim

America

I saw the same ghost as Joy Harjo on Anchorage's Fourth Street
Athabascan grandmother folded up in an ache in which nothing makes
sense

America your ghosts don't only exist in the past America
America you keep creating ghosts
When will you have enough

America?

America I'm in my right mind now

America

I killed for the first time at a month and a half
I bashed in the head of a halibut on the back of a boat in the waters off Old Harbor
Conrad told me without saying anything that I was to thank the fish for its life
and to thank the ocean for giving
America have you thanked the ocean?

America I hiked up the spine of the goddess Susitna on the outskirts of Anchorage
She lays sleeping on her side dreaming to wake when peace does
I crested the ridge expecting the earth to shake but nothing happened
My gloved hand trembled I shook
the world of gods and our world are the same
America what have you done? America when will you wake up?

America I'm in my right mind now
America
I found religion forty feet above the ground climbing without a rope in the Chugach
I danced vertically along an illuminated path
feet touching light hands pulling on it
I grabbed a light beam for support and pulled myself over the edge
of the cliff dangling I saw three mountain goats
a baby toddling along the precipice one full grown leading the way
one walking between the young and a fall
America those goats are my gods they taught me how to love
I know how to love and you didn't teach me America
I learned in spite of you America
When will you learn to love?

America I'm out my right mind now
America
I tried to kill myself when I learned that I existed before I was born
America I'm sorry I didn't like what you made me be
I drove ninety miles per hour chasing a turquoise stream I couldn't catch in
British Columbia fishtailing ninety on a patch of gravel praying
America
drove into oblivion white skies and burning forests in twisting Coastal Range mountain
passes inferno fingers snaking through valleys spidering summits of too dry trees
screaming charcoal screams scorched arms twisted embracing America
drove misty granite walls squeezing me melting glacier water bubbling from my open
mouth drove
I drove twenty seven straight hours on the day of the eclipse through your flatgrainlands
America on the edge of the Band of Totality Colorado to Cleveland chasing dusk and the
dead land of dead sun on the night of the eclipse mudstuck in Iowa racing rain on bald
tires carving Chicago interchanges duskdrained dreary drowsy drove
America landing twenty seven hours later Home Cleveland

I still couldn't sleep America
Why can you sleep
America?

America I'm in my mind now
America

I shine a spotlight through your penumbras
America America America

I see you
America shrouded in a skin not of your constitution
long existed before you were born America

America I check your pulse America and whisper in your ear blood cells rush
my breath to your brain

America you are in your right mind now
America
be ()born today

Don't Kiss the Alpaca Lips Pt. II- Death's Betrayal

Ford Focus Racecar

careens

curving

carving

diving

down

spills out of

clouds of smoke
paved alpine passes
pines blur by black
burned haze hangs
wild fires blaze as
night falls pass
into grand green

Inferno

Eden at the gates

hellfire crackles snap

ping limbs

heatweakened burning

snapCRASHING lighting struckTHUNDER
fire

*It's official: 894,491 hectares
burned B.C. facing
worst-ever wildfire season. Un-
precedented 1,029 fires
costing \$315.7-million to date.
evacuation orders
remain in place across B.C.*

Earth Eden in Chaos as

Inferno crawls closer

Creatures flee me in

Car race through

Earth Eden

evacuation

August 11th Inferno

burns \\\\hear from Charlottesville

raging torches circle shrine to

klan militia marching

American Mephistopheles TJ

destroyer and liar

Ford Focus Racecar

careens

barreling by logging trucks amputated limbs

piled 4 high stare blankly paralyzed by heaven

their kin wave arms in the wind conscious of
the theft the murder

August 12th Inferno
burns\\\\\\hear from Charlottesville—

eastward eastward Google Maps says 40 helpless hours eastward from Jasper (safe serene
turquoise streams pulse powerful healing)

“eastward 40 hours to battleground Charlottesville” chant to keep awake

Dead Serena from my phone in the passenger seat “- car
injured () is in the hospital ”

ambrosial glacial water flows turbulent rages through sunroof
(i had stolen a sack of it) a personal supply of immortality
(dipped the mouth of a plastic flask in the stream
drank deeply ambrosia melt freezing my veins

drowning frozen limbed blurry eyed CRASH nearly skidding corner

mephistophelean dream won't let me die regain control by
destroy-the-lie-destroy-the-lie-destroy-the-lie-destroy-the-lie-dest
roll window down cunning use a straw to snorkel

waters recede sight returns

40 hours eastward to
battlefield Charlottesville
fate assigned to the american meph TJ
drops me swampsucked time stuck in
Williamsburg, Va: Colonial Fiction
Billy's Burg: A Revolutionary City

american minions the demon residents of unreality prepare the apocalypse reading the wrong
book told the wrong story divinity unrealized humanity forsaken Death reigns

wonder

wonder
what will save us from our
impending ending of beingness
being these times as they is
we might wonder

then pause and wonder
why our feet are wetter
water up to your head
it's a 40 year flood! don't
worry bout gettin outta bed

wait n
wonder
what will save us
when we wake up late
in a newly formed lake

hot weather instabilities form from the loss of borders
according to US insecurity norms they now must nuke the ocean
to feel better but radioactive tides don't jive with the soil
so now we got a famine to go with our flood

wait n
wonder
what will save us
watching nuclear weather
reinforce the thinning lines of
o-zone layer but also blot out the
sun I say

"welp it's been fun"
this life i spent
 wandering
wondering
what would save us
before
wonder must

*Time quits, seeing the
apocalypse is the end of it.
Disguised as Pete, the swamps
teach Time to disperse in
decay. Knowing this love like
mud, Pete repeats Time's age-
old plea "Love keep Life and
Death in harmony..."*

Don't Kiss the Alpaca Lips Pt. III- Prophet Made False for Profit

though I look quite like white jesus
false prophet i don't profit but give
blessings as a joke christ cannibal
christian I'm breaking my bread and
biding my tongue let loose by some rum
hungover pirate morning braving world
wide streams to see big movie screen passion
of christ on the cross on a tiny laptop
teachings not lost but affirmed in agony
people, please
 easy to die when immortal
 but to be forever betrayed?

corralled sheep please stray
I opened the gates of heaven
walk with peace about the earth

Don't Kiss the Alpaca Lips Part IV: Life and Death Get Back Together

after Lawrence Ferlinghetti + Howard Finster's "American Devils are Friendly"

you can have a hell of a time here
 in your hell
if you don't mind a little
 smoke and fire
 all the time

yes, the world is a beautiful place
 to be born into
if you don't mind happiness
 being hard to find
 and not so very much fun

but a hell of a time can be had here
 in your hell
if you don't mind a little
 grime and wide-eyed weariness
 most the time

for the world is a beautiful place
 to be born into
with no dead minds
 just a few that
 replaced rhyme with so-called
 "reason"

it'll be one hell of a time here trying
 to transform hell
to a re-formed Eden
 re-arranging relation
 re-shifting restricted spaces
 and all the Time

making the world a beautiful place
 to be born into
Life and Death now speaking together:
 "with no collectors or money,
 you can cry with or without tears"

Life and Death back together
with the guidance of Love,
in this way they relate:
 “each leaf falling to the earth
 from above; we make it all up”

The Parakeet's Song

after Joseph Cornell's Habitat Group for a Shooting Gallery, 1943.

*"Parakeet, Parakeet, I repeat
I repeat, what you say so
what you say so— you shot me!*

you shot me what a spectacle,
seeing circus spectacle through
broken glass spectacles! cracks
connecting numbered tags
attached to talon-ed feet to class
any if i's and define fear but why
afraid of parakeet feet and a little
splash of color could it be because
I strike into song:

*"Parakeet, Parakeet, I repeat
I repeat, what you say so
what you say so— you shot me!*

mocked me up and propped
me up glass cased silence
the only cage that could keep
me some special sanitary gloves
to try to touch what you could
not handle: hearing how silly
you sound from someone
else's beak:

*"Parakeet, Parakeet, I repeat
I repeat, what you say so
what you say so you shot me!*

The Tales of Sal Salamander at Tarpington Heights

tree huggers and sitters

for those in the trees and on the ground

white pine climb line
pulled by Nettles high
where she can see white
vans of MVP creep

walkie talkie squeaks
a warning "security truck
on cove holler since last
morning" shitter trench
dug fresh this morning

how are things looking
up the hill another warning

clear cut trunks lie with
blue and white survey ties
line the way for
future pipe 40 feet
from where breakfast
warming and 30 feet
from squirrel chattering
teeth he too
high in a tree
where hung banners read

WATER
PROTECTORS

MOUNTAIN
DEFENDERS

WE WON'T
BACK DOWN

The Real Work

“Come to camp
we can’t wait!
help us dig shitter number eight!

“Build a shed if you can
concrete and harnesses
for those with more of a plan

munching mountaintop mint
leaves left behind in the clear
cut path of pipeline past paralleling
MVP easement to see those creeps
drill into underground creek now
brown chemi-killed water leaks
muddy down the street

“Come to camp
for the cinder block challenge!
heavy hauling up hill

“Wood to be split, water to go get
food to be dumpstered, dishes to be done

The Real Work.
washing while singing,
to the squirrel, saying “hi”

I'm Sal. Sal Salamander, if you must know my full name and story. I lived under a rock in front of a maple. Born there in fact. Ears and eyes coated in the mud that gave me rise (all the better to not see the blood and everyone who dies). Though, as my good friend Toad knows, you can't stay stuck in the mud forever. Let me find that photo...

I lived under that rock there with my mom, you see? at about 6:15 on that rock ring clock 'round the maple. And look! there's me on my first day above ground, peeking from the palm of that human child. *Him* thinking *me* wild, but he's the one who lived in a house bigger than the tree. That's the trend I continued to see; small creatures taking more than they need. Oil-d blood pumping greed, and despite popular belief, salamanders can't really live in fire, so that's why I'm here.

How to Balance

The Poetry. The Real Work.
 some Body has to do

on this body's
leg landed a grass
hopper while past
this porch birds pass
by seeing magnet
lines headed south

from flock separated
and found so
 some bodies are connected
 here to make sense:

Dream a world into existence
by living it by doing it

From some other cause than luck, Sal got stuck under the shed. (Sal's still me but being the third person gives me more autonomy; such to say "Sal got stuck" rather than that Sal really felt at home on his back passing nails through insulating foam under the floor and banging them into crossbeams. But The Real Work does seem hard and not much fun if you've forgotten or haven't learned yet your love like mud, so Sal has been/could be stuck, that much I can admit)

Yeah, Sal got dirty and stuck under the shed banging nails into crossbeams until he decided he needed to be warm for the winter and liked to live in mud and then he was happy to be there.

Winterizing

shall I prepare thee for a summer's day?
with winter on the way it wouldn't be smart
but to old man winter here is what I say:
away! you'd better stay—your chill, my heart
can't take and bitter cold shakes friends awake
to lay awaiting sun's warm rayed rain
to raise the temp and expose frost as fake,
a part time temp, unaware of the stakes

(though, know the stakes and go insane)

Oh, Winter, do you know what it is to be cold?
Oh, Winter, I wonder have you ever felt old?
At twenty-one my age feels older
with this season only growing colder

Winter, please, one last wish—fill veins with snow
so we might know the pains it takes for Earth to grow

Now, some may say to Sal what Sal sometimes says to himself:

“Why such silly talk about such shitty things?”

well, ya see Sal sometimes sits around the fire with his friends trying to figure out the world they want to be and how to get there. Yesterday, too, Sal was reading *Walden Two*, written by B.F. Skinner, who Leaf said was some wacky behavioral therapist dude, aka a manipulator, not to be trusted. So, what *do* we *do* with this busted brain and historical pain? They say therapy is key so step one: Honesty.

What are we really *doing* in academy? What’s getting done sitting on the couch theorizing for fun? Spout it in class and you pass but step two: Get Off Your Ass.

“Let our practice form our doctrine, thus assuring precise theoretical coherence”

-Doc, drunk

by Edward Abbey

And if poetry can be all that Yépez says it to be, we can transform ourselves by putting the form in to practice! Step three: Enact the World of Poet Dreams

(This a branch of Fanonian Mental Health Therapy)

Breaking walls will help you feel better. Mental barriers constructed by capital/colonial norms create a break from all other of earth’s forms— a limited space in which to be. Surveilled by all kinds of police in order to keep the order. No walls, no borders! Step four: Confront the Causes.

A continual process to be put in to practice.

So, Sal when enacting the world put in dreams (Language connected to how we be), is able to write lighthearted happy, instead of his other angry screams.

Ye Ol' Limerick of Sal

There was an Old 'Mander who lived under a tree.
The World from there was not how he'd hoped to see,
so he found some like-minded pals and started out as Sal,
singing "Be all you can Be! Fighting Dominion and MVP!"

To the question: why are you Sal Salamander in the poem? Well, our names can only be known when happened upon in our throats to that question at the gate:

“who should I tell them is here?”

and having pondered on the path (several hours in a black SUV, roads getting increasingly steep) an approximation of who I needed to be in this particular place, my space in this place put a name to my face. So, Sal is me emerging in action. Leaf, Toad, Nettles, too, all poets in their own. In collaboration, crafting a broader poem: this neighborhood for now known as Tarpington Heights.

These poems, just some small part of that place.

The Neighborhood

Tarps tied taut 'tween Trees
the first citizens you'll see,
having already passed by
Where Hung Banners Read
and Ash sipping hot coffee
cold early at the gate

“make your way down Road
Unpaved to where Blue Cooler
waits to show you the path to
Bridge of 2 by 4 Planks”

which is one of two ways to cross the Creek—
skipping through Stones the other trick
but a week wet has made them mud slick
and without a place to get warm you
can't take the risk that you might slip

“See, Litti got sprayed by
Skunk she chased then
shivered three whole days
after she bathed”

to avoid the spray and the shower—
keep an eye out for Skunk after hours
he slinks under Shed to warm his head
at Wood Fire Stove down by my legs
unfreezing feet above and beneath
Floorboards That Leak but before
you sleep you'd better leave a bagel
(so Skunk won't hafta rip the whole bag)

Tree Climbing

Leaves hanging on late into winter
sprung from a late wet spring

seasons seem shifted
 what could this mean
last leaf of autumn
 twirls lands at my feet
trees bare their skeletons
 that move underneath
Winter of you I wished to know
 the pains it takes to grow
and in the movement of trees
 their agony seems to show
go climb a tree! you'll see
 you'll dance in time you'll flow

in this you might learn
and you might come to know
the pains it takes to split
 the pains it takes to grow

Winter, thank you! for the grooves you show
now please cover it all with your blanketful of snow

First Will and Testament

should I die
put me back in that
Mud That Gave Me Rise

and not in a box!

no let me rot

my nerves disperse
in a mushroom plot

too toxic for stew but
still might give you a trip

so lay in the moss soft by my side
this just one more earthy disguise

Shedding: The Process

Like all other animals, salamanders must periodically replace skin cells as they die. Salamanders tend to replace them all at the same time, in a process called shedding or molting. Often, as shedding time approaches, salamanders spend more time than usual hiding, especially in damp substrates. Some salamanders refuse food prior to or shortly after shedding. When they are ready to jettison the old skin, they peel it off rapidly – Salamanders push their old skin forward by using their rear legs. So as not to waste any nutrients, salamanders usually eat their shed skins.

Shedding

Super Spy Sal
dons many a disguise
for many the surprise
for which he must transform
salamanders molt
flinging skins fer
more room ta grow
with wild grown whiskers
clipped Super Spy Sal
slides into a suit that suits
his reporter form to slide
by any suspecting eyes
snagged a name tag
the night before scouting
a route to the front of the floor
from an unlocked back door

PEOPLE
OVER
PROFIT
the painted banner

I'd rather we all live
than just a few survive
so only sneak with a sign
still you, Governor Northam
thrive this lunch and your
speech sponsored by Dominion
50K in the bank at your inauguration
for policies that put a compressor station
in place of a former plantation

"Union Hill to Navy Hill
Dominion is Out to Kill"

We sang and danced to a drum beat
picking up the occasional person
we'd meet seeking to feel free in
these increasingly fascist streets

hardly anybody out past five
what a time to be alive!

part parade part power
people free in the streets for hours!

I like to imagine Northam as he cowers
from the disruption the people
empowered finding refuge
together this cold December hour

a liberated liminal space in which to be free!
Oh! how Northam cowers at the disruption
of power the shift in perspective
Dominion's deception no longer concealed

but carried through the streets
and bars and galleries of art
Interviews from the trees on the TV

so he sends the police out their cars now
and on their feet so down different alleys
in groups of three we split curving back to cars

carrying the feeling of being free (for me all
the way to Ohio with a new skin
to shed

Author's Note:

Sal struck out for Ohio trying to find a safer place to hide. His parents took him in, Salamanders themselves, knowing the toils and trials of shedding skin, with many molts under their sleeves. They know to leave him to ponder falling leaves that land on his knee, leaving leash unattended Scout sees a chance to be free and leaps into the Suburban Wild, planned trees equidistant between, Dominion construction down the street, the dog comes back to the sound of treats. At this point I lose track of the dream, so I'll let the other author speak.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

When walking through the woods in Williamsburg, I try to walk quietly over the rustling leaves, stepping lightly to try to leave as little trace of me as possible. All in an effort to enter the dreamflow of the forest. If I say little- if not even my feet whisper a peep- could I listen to, could I hear, the past lives lived in and by this swamp speak instead? The loose soil struggles to keep its secrets, but trees who couldn't stand it anymore topple and spill towards the sinking pit at the center of it- manmade Lake Matoaka. With this erosion it seems there's almost as many fallen as standing trees. Before they're soft and tender in decay (dispersing finally into the landscape, finding out) their hardwood trunks trace precarious fractured paths into and out of ravines and other sunken places. Traveling this trail, you have to move in the right way, a flowing balance and a sure-footed leap from tree to tree. Following this map of decay takes a different kind of concentration— you have to play. There are, however, other ways to traverse this landscape, most of them I'll never know. Squirrels leave swirls of overturned leaves before scurrying up the nearest tree. A raccoon dips into a home dug between the roots of a beech tree with lichen crawling slowly up its side. I'm unable to encounter the woods whole. I can't even walk all the roads. The sinking pit at the center of it has a different effect on us all, with no one organism experiencing it in totality. But I can sing while I walk and add my small refrain to the chorus of the forest along with the leaves singing the movement of my feet. All these voices put together telling a fuller story.

I'll also never fully encounter the effects of climate change or its driving forces of colonialism and capitalism— the sinking pit we're all sliding into. Rather than fall into paralyzing anxiety over the incomprehensible scale of geologic time and the extensive innerworkings of colonial-capital control, Sal Salamander seeks to sing one particular path through the precarious landscape of late capitalism and impending mass extinction. It is my hope that in *Becoming-Sal* I can tune into to a different rhythm and contribute my voice to a song of playful coexistence.

Billy's Burg

dreams not fully your own

Wells Fargo holds its
breathe farther than I can
go engine breaks pump air
into lungs that leak mechanical
hum that keeps a constant
rhythm that heart beat
dum da da dum

the breath of the great beast asleep
reverberates through the street
it keeps me awake while I sleep
always up on my feet
even in dreams I have to creep
and I'm sure that one time I did meet
a deleuzian aye-gent in my sleep

See Dream-Me sort of keeps
a little homestead in the hills
I've been a couple of times
remembering now gives me chills

For I'm never there for planting,
chopping wood or the harvest
No Dream-Me brings me there
When the times are hardest

Perhaps it's to prepare
for the real-life nightmare
Wells Fargo beast money veins
pump pain and police and poison
water that leaks from fracking creaks
so facing FBI in my sleep I no longer
freeze but always stay light on my feet

I've never been inside my dream's
Appalachian home looking for a place
to hide behind the ridge line do I roam
I crawl into an abandoned mine
where inside I find old bones
so now I know that in this struggle
I'm maybe not so alone

Sitting in the corner
butt on cold wet stone
I sat with Dream-Me
and that pile of bones
Dream-Me fell asleep
to a land I'll never know
left me there still staring
into the sockets of the skull
And I wish I could recall
all that I saw there
but all I remember is that
I woke in the morning to that
Wells Fargo droning
aware that the world
of which I'm dreaming
is my bones
and has always been there

unrevised

this ground bleeds when it rains
these leaves of grass scream
force fed rainblood screamgurgling
(why the revisions)

this ground
bleeds
I kneel to it

a spook in a suit pushes me aside
he kneels to
 a puddle
 plunges a test tube
 bureaucratic lips lap
native blood sustains
this ground
bleeds
(why the revisions)

this ground bleeds and
leaves of grass scream
to

 Me
why.
 (tell the truth)you drink it too)

(and so do You)

follow the leaf falling follow

The primary layer of the forest is called the canopy. made up of the tops of trees. Tree tops form roof that blocks a good deal lot of light from entering the forest

fall

lose it in the (find it in the)

openopenopen

O

P

E

N

openopenopen

read the red reappearing

(the next layer is the understory)

red

O

P

E

N

openopenopen

follow

the le

af

falling

openopen

find

it *(the leaf is the food-producing part)*

FIND

IT

inthe

followfollowfollowfollowfollowfollowfollowfollow

read the red reappearing

red

O

P

E

N

another leaf falls (find it in the)

leaf falls (find it in the)

(find it in the

The last layer is the forest floor, which contains all of the () The dead matter releases nutrients into the soil that will be used () It is also very dark in this layer due to lack of sunlight.

another leaf falls

finds it

follow the follow the

*measurements and clues
carefully*

finds it
leaf

crumbled pushed
into
soil

*To begin, look for clearly
defined tracks*

finds it
tracks

follow the follow the

pushed into
soil
deep

depression
in the suckswamp mud

follow the follow the

*2-toed tracks are often
deer dear deer in the woods
like city no
predators
(killed by man) you
stroll in the woods like
city i follow your roads*

follow the follow the

footsteps

flip
leaves
pale
bellies
up
undersides
guide

follow the follow the
switch

roads

back
ing ravine
follow
down
ravine
creek mudsand
beach

*Two roads diverged
in a yellow wood*

follow
up away
intersect
concrete tarblack paved
human animal roads
read the red reappearing red o p e n
rented room read the red reappearing
dug living dead red red red red

dear deer must drink so too
do raccoon and look! a house
dug b/w exposed roots of beech

Billy's Burg

spend time swamp scurrying
skip

 scoot
concrete

 tube
spread leg bounding over muddy
raccoon and turtle tunnel
under road you'll see many
a toad (but they're probably
frogs) pond plop for luck through
orange muck on the surface rust

O! roadside swamp emerald entrance
to enchanted tree graveyard show me
how you see! Man made at the heart of
it Lake Matoaka! What's time sunk
at the bottom when they dug you
 what did they bury?

(if shallow swamp slave graves parking lot paved then what do you keep so deep?)

Billy won't say but
death and decay cause curious
trees to loose soil spill downhill
to find out
follow fallen trees
stemming small creeks
stepping carefully
 cross ravines
see what the swamp keeps
 (Heaney's bog hugged secrets
 snug as a gun better use it if you
 pull one out- but best not to keep
 them in the first place they only
 leave unfillable holes oozing in
swamps secrets pulled
 but I'm no dentist more of a deer
 pen is less of a gun and more of an ear
here (if you avoid the leaf layer) you can
hear (if you stop your crunching feet) can
hear the paths speak and the past speaks
through soil bound trees in language familiar

to the ear of a deer but it's one you
too can hear if you know how to listen
and if you listen right the road is rushing
water (mind made river to go with the
man made lake- now that's truly wild!)

listen wrong and hear the road speak

“over populated deer think of it this way
we're the only predators now and you're not our prey!
we only kill you to be kind—
would you rather die by mountain lion?
I gave you a city in the trees you should be thanking me!
Don't you know my daddy had that lake built!
I'm Billy this is my Burg!”

Billy white face red from screaming rolls
window up swarmed by bugs (mosquitoes
have a taste for irony sucking blood of the
blood sucker— Billy's dad's business name
was Middle Plantation he planted those graves
and planned the first cobble paved paths
that made the colonial capital past

Billy's desperate to be his own daddy
so he sells his father's lies as theme
park rides for a profit proffering false
1790 lives a colonial paradise for kids
with muskets orange tipped firing into
crowds no perfect practice when practicing for war

what do you sell guns to the kids for Billy?
why the fantasy of killing Billy? Me I won't be
willing to kill for you much less live and lie for you—

hold on Billy a frog is calling me back
to the creek where hopefully you won't
see me for a while

spend time swamp scurrying
skip

silent

stealthy

scoot

see Billy "owns" the swamp and claims
to own the view too
don't let him see you
or he'll fee you
to keep your free view
but swamp stew and
he'll never find you
used to walking

 paved plodding paths
 stepping cautious
 to keep mom's back

uncracked

 no twigs snapped neither
 when walking through woods
 not how
 but where you step
 (so be aware!)

big toe

 talon
 to mud patch
 leaf bare
 no cracks

but to leave no tracks

 barefoot beam balance
 trunk hopping tree to tree

 (if you're concerned about moving quietly)

but quicker highways are the deer byways—

 you'll see a few so wave!

(or they might bow and you should too knowing

 kinship before they bound out of view

three spots I've found

where groups bed down

between branches

on the ground resting my head

 on an oval leaf deer bed

spend time swamp scurrying

but these other small creatures

ticks and fleas ask me to leave

so i go

 skip

 scoot...

II.

spend time in town too
sidewalk strutting two-step-two

feet a metronome
speeding Time away from home

o'er ravines between
I leap- I'm off to see the queen!

only two miles or three
I'm back in sixteen ninety-three!

sidewalk slabs turn brick path
walking here
 you fall in the cracks

road of cobble plastered
leaves DoG Street
 further fractured

even Colonial Williamsburg Corp.
admits:

 Here History Never Gets Old

 “So, make sure you stop
 at our most popular photo-op!
 Step up to the shackles,
 let the wood block drop
 stand smiling with your neck
 and both wrists locked.

 The kids love it and you
 can say you'll leave 'em
 if they don't do as they're told—
 (now ma'am if I may be so bold)
 here your son can be a soldier
 straight spine, toy rifle on a shoulder
 blasting orange caps
 at tour groups
 as they pass
 have you ever seen a young one
 so caught up in his duty?"

Just a part of the beauty
of turning trauma to profit
repeat the past to teach the past
while reaching for your wallet

Here History Never Gets Old

here the paths speak and the past speaks
in a language of soil bound trees
pushed over and piled under concrete
cars speed and beep
it's hard to hear a peep
but ghosts aren't limited
to just vocal speech

sometimes they appear in the shower
rearranging molecules of steam

sometimes they appear in a dream

sometimes they're here for an hour

sometimes they're never seen

yet everywhere I walk
I know someone else has been

no way that I can spin it
just repeat what I've been told

yes, Here History Never Gets Old

decay and construction rearrange
past lives lived in and by
Billy's Burg that never dies

thundercloud
communication

bright green nails painted
on thin green fingers
brown arms stemming
back down sturdy trunk

thundercloud communication
can be confused as destruction
whole lotta hot air heavy

BOOM

(c
L AP)

BOOM

(c
L AP)

listen now

BOOM

in the pauses

BOOM

to the rhythm

BOOM

the thunder

BOOM

(in your head)

BOOM

(all clap)

THE RED COATS ARE COMING THE RED COATS ARE COMING

WEEEEEOOOOWEE

EEOOOOWEEE

EEOOOOOO

CRACKOW

musket volleys crash up and down dog street

On day one, the opening event depicts the beginning of the crisis in Virginia.

THE RED COATS ARE COMING THE RED COATS ARE COMING

1 if by digital sea, 2 if by land

if by land from Richmond

if by land from Arlington

if by land from Culpepper

if by land from Norfolk

if by land from Newport News

if by land from

Christopher Newport University
(and don't forget ur local Billy's Burg

Brigade

see dorms are property of the state and as such

search and seizure is "legal" with probable cause

like

crossing the street wrong

walking funny

29 in a 25

living on a campus

(all such offenses multiplied by

oppressive

racist

violent

brutal immoral

us jUsTiCe n Democracie

THE RED COATS ARE COMING

THE RED COATS ARE COMING

WEEEEEOOOOWEE

EEOOOOWEEE

EEOOOOOO

battalions

storm dorms with dogs

entrapping students

WEEEEEOOOOWEE

EEOOOOWEEE watch out your friend could be a snitch

weeeeooooooweee

gotta love that commun

it

EEEEEEEEEEEE

THE RED COATS ARE COMING

THE RED COATS ARE COMING

CRACKOW

CRACKOW

musket volleys

crash up and down dog street

As the sun dawns

sun

shine and

shuffle sun

shuffle on up

and you will

shine

you are low

now

but you

will

shuffle and

you will shine

sun

you will shine

shine down on to

you

the people and

shuffle people

shuffle people

so

you can shine

shuffle people and

the sun will shine

the sun will shine

for you

the people

the sun is for you

the people so

shine

musket volleys crash up and down dog street
AMERICA IS AT WAR

AT WAR

rally round the flag

all ye patriots

rally round the flag america is at

war

WAR

war

on drugs

(just the ones they can't make money on)

WAR

rally round a flag

all ye patriots

WAR

war

on terror

that's causing more terror

and funding more terror

terror walking down the street

terror seeing a cop car

america is at war

2,220,300 prisoners of war in

6,125 labor camps

america is at war

I'm sure you've seen the tanks rolling down your street

the occupying force clad in black a thin blue

line of soldiers marching into battle

in schools and towns

america is at war

all ye patriots

rally round your (?)

O america is at war and

we are fighting

MANIFESTO

imaginative construction (MUST) (WILL)
become material

by words
WE (i) (YOU)

(CHOOSE)(~~choose~~)

^this^
is a (grand) rebirth
(radical)?

art becomes life
sprouting from the word
seedling in syllable
sprouting to LIFE

SUP
Biches

I'm
a

Big
ass
k

Stick
stick
a stick
stiick
tellya

i i i
i
i

wax on
wAx of
f

(the world we live in dictates the art we produce)
we live in the art we construct OR

(r)evolution

mosses and grasses to bugs and bees
rats and meese vine crawling up the tree
seek to be human when we learn (through trial &
much error) better to move like air next time I'll
be a bear or mountain lion so rare quiet shadow
creeping with care from west coast to east and then
out to sees where the ocean current might take me
blubbery whale floating easy mouth open ingesting
all there is to eat all there is to be this matter that makes up me
propped up by intertwined energ(y)ies

then in thanks I'll be a tree turning light to
heat of fire by night cooking meat that too
once fed by me turning light to leaf to
mosses and grasses for bugs and bees

allies

gently wind born waves ripple north
current calm coursing still south and east
underneath easy to the ocean paddle
boarder with bad balance drops to their
knees lower at the back of the pack
a smushed baby ruth for emergencies
floating out to sea see shark and drop the
candy bar in the pool poop tricked shark
should swim away disgusted discussed it
with park ranger who said there's no
sharks in the Potomac but bulls smell
blood and breed in brackish and in
Connecticut cougar with tracking collar
hit by a car 800 miles from Colorado he left
to "see about a girl" see magic in mystery
in mountains under seas or mangled on
the road under siege sometimes it seems
the trees the rivers the seas
insurgent geographies

grass

quote:

been dry for a while only
wet when you three legged
sprinkle me DC city

Joey with a degree in biochemistry
smokes weed by the water
after work laying marble

quote:

life is beautyfull man
(ooo that grass tickles)

quote:

I'm so fucking high fuck
everything bro you got a snack?
see my waters been running low
I been doing my best man
I might just go home
try to get some rest man it's
the temperature the weather

got those sandy bottomed rocks exposed
"what do you see when you look out there?"

quote:

movement looks like a man by
Teddy Roosevelt island I saw a monster
get mad something dangerous flash
its teeth and flip to show its feet
 (it's feet? you can't mean)

in the river water running low
sandy bottoms exposed it's
the temperature the weather
been dry for a while only wet when
sprinklers flowing walk through them
it's refreshing or impressive
if you laser wire weave dry
been dry grass baking under a dry grass sun
river you better run
you better run

along the canal mud no more
now dust dry kicks up heels high
place 'em down with care now
we don't need
 no dust in the air now

oh fuck it

dance and twirl
 give it a whirl
no one will see
 they'll be too busy
wiping sand out of their eyes
 waking up
they start dancing too
 whirling and twirling
dust storm swirling
 underneath the heat
of DC streets
 where for once
you can't see

the giant white tower
two twinkling red eyes

(tell my usual lie)

there really really are eyes
 cameras watching skies as
 dust storm forms un-normed

but while i dream...

google branded mechanical
spiders tickle
up
through my nose
scrape brain tissue into a vial
VILE catch a ride
sLidE outta
tear duct (the sand in my eyes is their shit)

surveillance
consent
profit

pigs'll pay a pretty penny for your thoughts
I'll give mine for free:
America, be
your
yearning to breathe free

The End of the Anthropocene, Please

most human about human is manipulation of
reality confused capitalists construe construction
as corporations funding the US nation to back
exploitation of most human about human is
manipulation of reality come close you'll see
the construction of an alternate reality
build it with your brain with me
communicating constantly
we're bits of matter I cannot lie
from dust to dust we go when we die
bodies are just bodies beautiful that move
the matter that matters when you're in the mood yes
you're conscious you're conscious you're conscious you
refuse to sell yourself for 7.50 scribble poems instead
and hope they won't still use paper
after you're dead

revolutionary poetry

squeak of sweat lined hands
smearing streetlight to turn
90 and head up hill to get out
the rain and peruse poetry

wondering if the neo nazis to be
marching these DC streets have
poets studying Pound to improve
how filthy fascism sounds

reminder that these words work for them

whitmanian language co-opted by clinton
constructs fantasy of free american
language
but remember they killed Neruda
for the love of his people
now they only publish his love
poems paradox

how to publish radical thought if even
when you can't be bought they'll sell you
as something else and we'll buy it because
when these words bleed onto the page and form
forms lines for war we'll think it's great
metaphor for how this language kills
this language
this language of
subsumation exploitation
violence is the way of this nation

(and the cause of my minds constipation-
the sewer is city run! even if my shit
makes it to the river it's mingled with
the poop of pound poets and politicians by then

so the question remains

silly willy when will he realize that
newspapers pasted together are just
newsletters of past times
(about book five)

new letters I struggle to write
revolutionary poetry can never stay
that way but why?

min(e)d matter

can we cut my hair
outside so baby blue
birds can hide or
swallow maybe you
could pad your pad
with these pieces of
my dead head insulation
can't build a form but
might keep the kids
worm squirm in in their
nests til Sunday morning
on a faith high they leap
cuz priest said they
would fly or fall in a heap
but either way they won't
have to keep hearing rotten
hair whisper in their sleep (see
hidden ideations creep out your
scalp sometimes wake up sad how
could it be dreams zaney brainy schemes
 why the government invented
 shampoo to steal oil piping
 ideas down the drain conditioned
 every day to stay soft and supple
mined mind it's matter

waste

the city shit itself muddy
diarrhea fast flowing logs

scattered

scattered

scattered

limbs on the river evidence of the
violence of the storm that grows lush green
leaves on the far the other bank

I can't see fish so I won't write about them

3 days ago kayaks today other plastic trash
birds peck particles riding floatsam feasting day they
fly upstream paralleling planes paralleling Potomac

count to see if more bottles or branches
give up counting twigs
(only those big enough for bird)

4 tires I could have a car 5! I can drive

realize cigarette butt dropped 3 days ago washed into the soup

try to imagine the opposite bank 500 years of growth
ago but shit sticks to the fingers where the current
curves in calm
shore smeared with signs

WARNING
COMBINED SEWAGE OVERFLOW
DISCHARGE POINT
POLLUTION MAY OCCUR
DURING RAINFALL

permit no. 021199

a crow rides a fridge to the ocean
what language is that

stream samples

you can taste a lot about a place in its
water walk in the shoes of a deer or
raccoon for a mile crouching to sniff the
tracks after a while you'll smell water moving
through your ear hear it gurgle swish and
gargle local water between your teeth
breadth now friendly mingles with the wind

breathe

New Jersey Poem

Paterson I can't drink you without a filter
without a tummy ache

hop the fence

fill a bottle anyways

man is not a city

woman not the woods

fertile words not water

(William wrote the fifth

book after finding every time

you dip your cup

you get a different sip

at the shore

with waves tumbling

Paterson

they don't hear your rumbling

roar hidden by city

be careful slippery when wet

(or depressed)

at 9:23 every Wednesday watch pale

woman repeating plunge like summer hail

shattering on sharp rocks from falling

falls churning in constant motion since before the

bridge was built to dump bodies in mob movies

where you end up like a dog

that's been beat too much

til they spend half their

budget just to cover it up

now!

BOORN in the YOO ES AYY I WAS

BORN in the YOO ES AYY

where if there's one thing we all know

you have to risk your life

for the freshest water

laying on belly

arm extended over the falls

dreams long

after John Berryman

redeyed Ryan raged the day:
"y o i o do you want me to die o
asleep and old waiting on a better
day to be better I had better make
it you better make it too take my word
I'll take yours too always wanted a tattoo
scratch this page rage n rage does that
make it better? no
well let me see your writing's still
asleep your dreams do wake do you
want to?

come out and talk
nothing feels as it might or ought
were not you glad at the top

of the morning redeyed Ryan could not
find peace or a piece to smoke it out of
out of mind out of grips of Time redeyed
Ryan raged why by day anyway

frenzied feeding

not content yet with your death
they hang from bridges
nets keep you alive (half)
strangled throw the dolphin
back black and blue bruised
car crash impact with concrete
dense water hard smack on side
bridge high splash limbs float flushed

suffer no more in the river
fish feast belly by belly

 no I don't want to die just kill
 a couple parts of I
go back to surprise how
 quickly
 i f
 all into
 I could die
 imagining

imaginary conversation with therapist
don't worry I won't kill myself my life
line curves around the palm gripping
crystal wand the psychic said I'd live
long plus I want to die with clear head so
I'll probably live forever however whenever
I go it will have been forever for me and
longer for those fish quick forever
feast by my side

the birds and the bees

my car once broke down in Manitoba
40 miles from the closest town
because a bee flew into the max air flow sensor

I turn the key and press the gas and
a swarm of honeybees pours out of the air vents
lifts my car and

drops me 3000 miles west
perched on top of a frozen waterfall
outside of Valdez, Alaska

the queen bee looks me in the eyes says
i'm alive
honey spilling from her mouth

I lick it from the carpet floor

the car falls 120 feet and lands wheels down on the road

a redwood tree springs 300 feet from my belly button
I thank my mom
the doctors say that if the roots inch any closer to my spine
i'll lose the ability to see
mosquitoes and yellow lights

my right foot turns into the corpse of a raven
i yank and jerk my knee
lifeless wings flop not flap

i can't fly

my left foot birthed a live one
it flapped its wings but couldn't get any lift
so I cut it off with a rusty swiss army knife

bird blood and my blood look the same

I always wanted a pet
but it would be a crime to keep a bird

does the caterpillar die in the cocoon?

if it does
maybe I'll come back
as a bird

on Kodiak Island bald eagles dive bomb dumpsters and invade the landfill
it's the only time the American Narrative has made sense

the CIA lost a nuclear device in the uterus of the goddess Nanda Devi
while they were trying to listen to the chinese
the umbilical flow will poison half a billion people

rivers

my girlfriend's tears taste like saltwater taffy
she cried when we left the desert
I broke down bawling in the Yukon
after I yelled at my mom on the phone
and the traffic wouldn't

GET OUT OF MY WAY

if life is a stable conception of identity over time
I has died five times already and is planning on a sixth

I took my hands off the wheel
closed my eyes
started to count
i is a coward and only got to 7

God and Adam have been fingering each other
for 500 years in the sistine chapel
another sex scandal The Church is covering up

we walk alongside
hundreds of handless gods everyday
rivers flowers trees
the birds and the bees

but I also saw a Hindu god once with 90 fingers
i doesn't know what that means
but after playing with one finger for 500 years
Adam is probably ready for more

i grabs Adam's finger and pulls him from the roof

To a Telephone Pole on the Outside of an Icy Corner

which won't let me die
my body or my mind
for six months one or
the other kept my hands
from waving the wheel to
trees waving back truthfully
telephone pole saved me
walked away unscathed
but was close to flipping
snow filling window cracks
from crash the vins don't match
and the new door creaks open
but it's unscratched

didn't drive for day or two
but if you can't fly for fear
of falling what kind of bird
are you anyways it's a win
win knowing a crash has
saved you in the past so
head on! it wasn't you
your body or your mind
dead tree skeleton
kept you from dying

give thanks to the tree
by continuing to be

eco-therapy

heart beat rocking chair anxious
leaves shaking table veins that tense
relaxing fingernail burning butt

crabapple raining thud! soil
crack! stone ow! skull ouch
stays awhile can't shake it

squirrel shakes it shimmies
hanging shaking leaves loose
small chew chomping mostly
dropping flesh saving seeds

this branch clean small feast
stored in puffed cheeks

comes out puckered cheeks
to plant new tree relieved by release
fertilizing soil squirrel chatters
"doesn't dropping feel good"

what penumbras?

unfurled tongue laps rott
en sap from you long dead oak
spinning buzzing
 lost
drowsy bee crawls
 lost
abdomen tight wing frail but
flower! a flower...
sweet calamus rod
sustains pollen fertilizes
 buzzing "I'm alive"

No Dictators in the Assemblage
after Amiri Baraka

What is tomorrow
that it can't come today?

What's a pot
if you haven't made the clay?

A poem without a what
or a way to say?

A horse takes care of itself
more than a car but
takes communication to travel
speak softly and carry a big carrot
(no gas cap on a horse's ass)

What is tomorrow
won't come today
without a new what
and a new way to say

tell me and I gain of the telling

Acknowledgments:

Thank you to the following journals for first publishing poems:

The Gallery, Fredericksburg Literary and Arts Review

So many human and non-human people had an immeasurable impact during the writing of this manuscript. I will only name a few here with special distinction, but my undying gratitude goes out to all the rest.

A special thank you to Professor Hermine Pinson at the College of William and Mary for her support. Over the last year and a half, she has been a most dependable confidante and advisor. Professor Pinson was there through all the highs and lows, without her guidance this project may never have made it this far.

Another special thank you to my close friend W.C. I value our conversations and your presence immensely.

Thank you and solidarity forever to my family at Tarpington Heights. Working with you all helps me maintain hope that a future, a better future, is possible.

Huge thanks to my partner Serena, my true touchstone, may I someday embody the strength, grace, and tenderness with which you move through the world.

Bibliographic Notes:

A number of poems have text pulled from google searches:

“still” features text from an article titled “Brain Areas Critical to Human Time Sense Identified.”

“Shedding: The Process” is taken from an article on caring for a pet salamander.

“follow the leaf falling” borrows lines from guides to forest composition and following animal tracks.

“Redcoats” takes large chunks of text from various articles on the Colonial Williamsburg website.

A Book List:

I owe a great debt to all of the poets who I have read while working on this book. Without reading their voices I could not have found my own. I am including the full “Layers of Swamp” Reading List in the hopes that having flipped through my poems the reader might go read someone smarter.

Poetry:

Etel Adnan- *The Arab Apocalypse*

Fadhil Al-Azzawi- *Miracle Maker*

Kwame Alexander- *Let Us*

Sherman Alexie- *What I’ve Stolen, What I’ve Earned*

A.R. Ammons- *Glare, Brink Road*

John Ashberry- *Rivers and Mountains, Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror, Selected Poems*

Nanni Balestrini- *Blackout*

Amiri Baraka: *SOS, Transbluesency, Wise/ Why’s/ Y’s, The Dead Lecturer*

Gerald Barrax- *The Deaths of Animals and Lesser Gods*

Charles Bernstein: *Republics of Reality, Controlling Interests, Girly Man*

Anselm Berrigan- *Some Notes on My Programming, Loading(w/Johnathan Allen), Integrity & Dramatic Life*

John Berryman- *The Dream Songs*

Frank Bidart- *Half Life: Collected Poems*

Peter Blue Cloud- *Elderberry Flute Song*

Robert Bly- *Morning Poems, This Tree Will Grow for a Thousand Years, Sleepers Joining Hands*

Daniel Borzutzky- *The Performance of Becoming Human*

André Breton- *Selections*

Colin Browne- *The Hatch*

Paul Celan: *70 Poems*

Aimé Césaire: *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land, Discourse on Colonialism, The Collected Poetry*

Fred Chappell- *Wind Mountain, Earth Sleep*

Inger Christensen- *It. Alphabet*

CAConrad- *A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon*

Gregory Corso- *Gasoline + Vestal Lady on Brattle, Long Live Man*

Julio Cortázar- *Save Twilight*

Robert Creeley- *Life and Death*

E.E Cummings- *Anthropos, Tulips & Chimneys*

kari edwards- *iduna*

Larry Eigner- *Calligraphy Typewriters*

T.S Eliot- *The Waste Land and Other Poems*

Lawrence Ferlinghetti- *Coney Island State of Mind, Pictures of the Gone World, Americus I, Endless Life, Wild Dreams of a New Beginning, Starting from San Francisco, San Francisco Poems*

Robert Frost- *The Road Not Taken and Other Poems*

Federico Garcia Lorca: *The Poet in New York, The Gypsy Ballads*
 Forrest Gander- *Lynchburg, Science and Steepleflower, Torn Awake*
 Ross Gay- *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*
 Khalil Gibran- *The Prophet*
 Jack Gilbert- *Refusing Heaven, The Great Fires*
 Allen Ginsberg: *Howl and Other Poems, Kaddish, The Fall Of America*
 Guillermo Gómez- Peña- *Warrior of Gringostroika*
 Ferreira Guilar- *Dirty Poem*
 Seymour Gresser- *A Departure for Sons*
 Joy Harjo: *She Had Some Horses, How We Became Human, Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*
 Jim Harrison: *Saving Daylight, Dead Man's Float*
 Terrance Hayes- *Lighthouse, Wind in a Box*
 Seamus Heaney- *Selected Poems 1966-1987*
 Juan Felipe Herrera- *Notes on the Assemblage*
 Nazim Hikmet- *Collected Poems*
 Bell Hooks: *Appalachian Elegy*
 Susan Howe: *Debths*
 Langston Hughes: *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz, Good Morning Revolution*
 Richard Hugo- *Making Certain It Goes On*
 Tyehimba Jess- *Olio*
 Vanessa Jimenez Gabb- *Images for Radical Politics*
 Krysia Jopek- *Hourglass Studies*
 Jack Joyce- *Collected Poems*
 Jack Kerouac- *Pomes All Sizes*
 Kenneth Koch- *Selected Poems*
 Yusuf Komunyakaa- *Dien Cau Dau*
 Denise Levertov- *The Freeing of the Dust*
 Layli Long Soldier- *Whereas*
 Siwar Masannat- *50 Water Dreams*
 E. Ethelbert Miller- *First Light: Selected Poems*
 Elizabeth Morris- *Waiting for Climbers*
 Blueberry Elizabeth Morningstar- *Whale in the Woods*
 Ogden Nash- *The Ogden Nash Pocket Book*
 Pablo Neruda- *Canto General, Ventures of an Infinite Man, Love Poems, Residence on Earth*
 Naomi Shihab Nye- *19 Varieties of Gazelle*
 Frank O'Hara- *Lunch Poems*
 Charles Olson- *The Maximus Poems, Archaeologist of Morning*
 Octavio Paz- *Early Poems 1935-1955*
 Claudia Rankine- *Citizen*
 Theodore Roethke- *Words for the Wind: The Collected Verse of TR*
 Jerome Rothenberg- *A Seneca Journal*
 Sonia Sanchez- *shAke loose my skin*
 Carl Sandburg- *Chicago Poems, Harvest Poems*
 Cedar Sigo- *Royals*

Ron Silliman- *N/O, Xing, Revelator*
Safiya Sinclair- *Cannibal*
Shel Silverstein- *Where the Sidewalk Ends, A Light in the Attic*
Patricia Smith- *Big Towns, Big Talk, Incendiary Art*
Gary Snyder- *Turtle Island, Mountains and Rivers without End, Earth House Hold, Myths & Texts*
Mark Strand- *Reasons for Moving*
Jean Toomer- *Cane*
Andrei Voznesensky- *Dogalypse, Nostalgia for the Present*
Ocean Vuong- *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*
Derek Walcott- *The Prodigal*
Robert Penn Warren- *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce*
Walt Whitman- *Leaves of Grass, Selected Poems (ed. Charles Shmidgall)*
Saul Williams- *Said the Shotgun to the Head*
William Carlos Williams- *Imaginations, Paterson, Spring and All, Selected Poems*
Heriberto Yépez- *Transnational Battle Field*
Yevgeny Yevtushenko- *Bratsk Station and other poems, Selected Poems, The Face Behind the Face, A Precocious Autobiography, Wild Berries*
Louis Zukofsky- *American Poets Project (ed. Charles Bernstein)*

Also:

Edward Abbey: *Desert Solitaire, Monkey Wrench Gang*
Donald Allen: *The New American Poetry Anthology*
Charles Bernstein- *My Way*
Inger Christensen- *The Condition of Secrecy*
Judith Cofer: *The Line of the Sun*
Junot Diaz: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
Frantz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*
Lawrence Ferlinghetti- *City Lights Anthology*
Khaled Furani- *Silencing the Sea: Secular Rhythms in Palestinian Poetry*
Eduoard Glissant- *The Poetics of Relation*
William Harris: *The Jazz Aesthetic: The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka*
Richard Hugo- *The Triggering Town*
Lynn Keller- *Recomposing Ecopoetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene*
Zuzanna Olszewska- *The Pearl of Dari: Poetry and Personhood Among Young Afghans in Iran*
T.F. Powys- *Unclay*
Thomas Pynchon- *Vineland*
Jerome Rothenberg- *Shaking the Pumpkin*
Gertrude Stein: *How to Write*
Mark Strand- *The Contemporary American Poets Anthology*
Chögyam Trungpa- *Shambala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior, The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*
Anna Tsing- *The Mushroom at the End of the World*
Kurt Vonnegut- *Cat's Cradle*

Eliot Weinberg- *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*

William Carlos Williams- *I Wanted to Write a Poem*

**Heriberto Yépez- “Against Luekotropic Poetics” , “Ethopoetics”

