

# **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.

\*

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.

\*

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

\*

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

**Photo Credit: Matthew Brady**