



# INHERITANCE

A POETRY COLLECTION BY  
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WRITTEN DURING THE  
RECONNECTING FOOD ROOTS  
PROGRAM ON  
LOPEZ ISLAND, WASHINGTON  
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# ELEGY FOR 1789

shards of shimmering  
Oyster  
scatter the eroding line,  
They speak mouth,  
hand, the eater  
feet in the sand  
like mine  
did he hear the gentle knock  
of the canoe in this bay,  
rock  
Of ages  
Cleft for me  
Once camas oceans  
to eternity  
The paddle sliced  
The silent sheen,  
Its wave still meets  
the shore  
Berry, salmon, drum and home  
go but come again  
My ancestors,  
Killers and takers  
filled the land with grain  
On their heels  
ivy, thicket, and broadleaf plantain  
Scott's broom flaming  
Its mighty arrival.  
I long to see  
the meadows, aflame  
the curls of smoke  
Speaking kinship  
But even in the heart  
of the breathing woods  
I take, and take  
Camas, teach me  
how not to be  
invasive



# ODE TO HODGSON ROAD

Sunrise,

Wind that paints me rosehips

and swims in the saltcedar

Blue heron in the

Shallows, silhouetted.

Cold,

I feel it in my face and my

soul, this living

freedom leads the unknown road

into blinding sun

Birds,

a full-throated raven croaking the

horizon of autumn, landing on a

Lichened barn sinking

like a shipwreck

Peace,

cows that dot glowing pasture

looking loved

A fence of driftwood keeping

No one out,

The deer nor

I, in search of a blackberry.



# MANSANTO

We  
Mighty,  
eternal  
In the beginning  
only loved the land, our mother  
Sustained with her lifeblood. we,  
The forgetters of gratitude  
Changed the vital seed  
we shaped it for a profit  
and with it our soul was changed  
We forgot our mother  
we forgot our mother  
and with it our soul was changed,  
we shaped it for a profit  
Changed the vital seed  
The forgetters of gratitude,  
Sustained with her lifeblood. we  
only loved the land, our mother  
In the beginning.  
eternal  
mighty  
We



# SUBSIDENCE

Am I all for nothing  
bounty blooms in these palms,  
accept my grief

Take my everything  
To take back wildfire, willful fate  
am I all for nothing

Rain thunders down,  
verdure on the heel of destruction  
accept my grief

This soil is my body,  
decomposing into eternity  
Am I all for nothing

Against abundance  
we map the inevitable war  
accept my grief

This land, my mother  
Sweet belonging please tell me  
Am I all for nothing  
accept my grief



# SABBATH

The burden of loss  
hangs in the air, Hail  
to the golden corn  
Thou shalt let it rest and lie still  
Hail it as a king  
Earl L. Butz, Secretary of Agriculture  
remembered more for a vulgar  
Racial comment, is dead at 98  
Tell him  
Get big or get out  
The footprints of the Windigo in  
a square mile of industrial soybeans  
the soul of the soil  
is shared with the grain  
Tell him  
That the poor of thy people may eat  
1. Produce more  
And because they had no root, they withered away  
2. Sell abroad  
You are the peacemakers,  
That great god  
the most productive part  
Of America  
Tell him  
the economists are wrong  
the soul of the grain  
is shared with the bread  
Thou shalt not wholly reap  
the corners of thy field  
from fencerow to fencerow  
thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger

Tell him  
In nature, nothing exists alone  
the soul of the bread  
is shared with you  
One must always pretend something  
among the dying  
Tell him  
Thou shalt neither sow thy field  
nor prune thy vineyard  
Tell him  
the land will reciprocate  
Tell him  
That it is we  
who are important



# WEEDS

The neighbors don't know what to think when they first meet us,  
what influence our new ways will be on their children  
Whether our harvests will be more crop or weed  
They watch us wrangle nature — this soil's thanks  
is slow coming. We might need unwarranted advice or a jam jar of love  
Spoon slowly, and taste the heady honey of privilege

The mansions open their doors and pour summertime privilege,  
The thing about us  
is that we will learn what we can with what we're given, love  
with abandonment like children  
Our reality is concrete and thankless  
But we hope recklessly, despite the debt and median of weeds

Our ancestors knew how to make medicine from weeds  
and braid life from the sea in waves of bountiful privilege  
They knew the land in ways I can't imagine, gave thanks  
To it for sustaining us,  
for feeding our children.  
This I know: to feed is to love

and to love the most sustainable act of all. This love,  
we carry it in our hands when we pull the weeds  
and show the roots to our children.  
To teach kindness is a stunning privilege —  
to show that this soil is land, it is home, it is us  
We press our palms to the soil and plant thanks

and save the seeds for next year. Thankless  
heat, torrential rain, and lifeless land reciprocate a loss of love  
We stand at the edge of the expanding wildfire and have only us  
to thank, sometimes I don't have the strength to weed  
out and replant, I know the less privileged  
Die daily but am still guilty of wanting children



Wherever I go, I see the footstep of greed, children  
Trained in our selfish methods, empty of thanksgiving  
and inheriting our misused privileges  
Is this our only expression of love,  
The highway cloverleaf laced in weeds  
crumbling above us

because I want sparrows for my children, inheritances of love  
and heirlooms of thankfulness. I learn from the weeds  
that to *be* is a privilege, and to try, despite all, the most human version of us.



a

# Farmer dies

...that some farmers receive more than  
...subsidies and that much of the program  
...companies for administrative expenses

The government provided millions of dollars in subsidies  
pay for much of the cost of their crop insurance policies  
to a Government Accountability Office report released last

against

disasters

and

destruct

heavily

farmers

protect

the losses

cost

the

reaching

the

limit

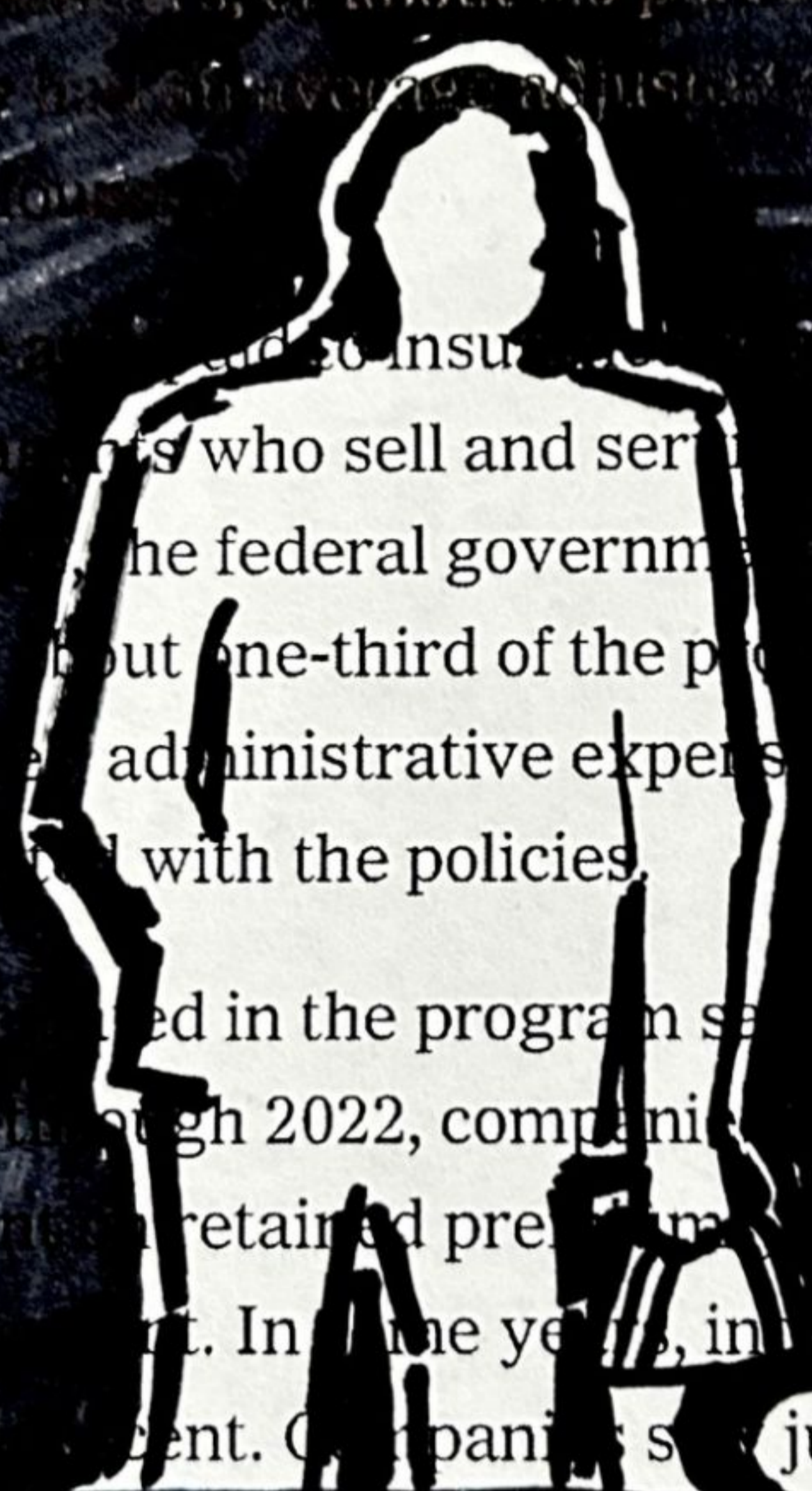


...shareholders with the largest gains  
more than \$1 million. Federal funds to help pay for their  
...included... in the South that benefited from \$7.7 million  
...in the West that received \$6.6 million.

Last year, 1,341 policyholders, or about 0.3 percent of the  
...the... an average annual...  
\$900,000, average...

...the... insurance  
...agents who sell and serve  
from 2011 through 2022, the federal government  
about \$3.6 billion, or about one-third of the program's  
...administrative expenses  
financial gains associated with the policies.

Companies that participated in the program saw  
the... From 2011 through 2022, companies  
of return of 16.8 percent on retained premium  
rate of return of 40.2 percent. In the years, in  
of return exceeded 30 percent. Companies saw just one year of losses





There ought to be a limit

reform

cost

Budget

that could save

could have saved

could have saved

farmers

The

the country

no

dollars

increase

the years

or

cover losses



# A GIRL, WHO HAS NEVER SEEN IT, LONGS FOR THE PRAIRIE

Call me a mourner, in my black dress  
From the rockies to the mississippi  
holder of my heart, like a father I've never met,  
A sea of grasses that haunts me

From the rockies to the mississippi,  
From Saskatchewan to Texas  
a sea of grasses that haunts me  
Coyote, wail me home to sleep

From Saskatchewan to Texas  
Death wanders in our wake  
coyote, wail me home to sleep  
under stars of an older sky

Death wanders in our wake  
Plowing bluestem and switchgrass  
Under stars of an older sky  
the echo of the buffalo

Plowing bluestem and switchgrass  
driven ever on for more  
The echo of the buffalo  
in acres of barren fields

Driven ever on for more  
Guilt in the silk of the corn  
in acres of barren fields  
meadowlark, forgive me

Guilt in the silk of the corn  
my people buried here  
meadowlark, forgive me  
Teach me the forgotten tongue

My people buried here  
covered in lifeless dust  
Teach me the forgotten tongue,  
the love of a daughter

Covered in lifeless dust  
a mourner, in my black dress  
The love of a daughter  
holder of my heart,  
like a father I've never met



# SKYWOMAN

we care for  
love for  
hold for, earth life ancient we  
Cradle in our bodies  
The miracle of existence, so  
know the meaning of  
Gratitude we  
harmonize the work songs  
of harvest we  
know the land as a sister,  
tend its endings and births  
Find the tender heart of  
the soul and braid it  
To beginnings, we  
scatter the chaff  
windward to return  
home, in us  
we have borne pain  
And sorrow so ancient  
it breathes  
Yet  
blessing runs like a river  
from our fortitude  
sun sky ovary seed  
When I pray for, hope for  
I remember  
like the cedar  
the women hurt unspared  
unacknowledged  
And I know,  
I have the strength  
to keep giving



# INHERITANCE

My grandmother grew up in corn country. Over there, in the towns of seven hundred with one street light, they promise you you can hear the corn growing. On a still night, stand at the roadside amongst the bottles and shattered glass and close your eyes. The expanding cell walls crackle like destruction.

There's a story my grandmother never tells. She was raised by corn, but she wouldn't want me knowing that there's no life in it. She wouldn't confess how the genes of the seed are claimed by the companies. Their existence isn't their own. They are designed so they can drown in chemicals and turn a profit anyway. They burst forth from the dead soil, giving and giving in acres of glowing green, a clean cry for help. They cannot become the place of their planting, can't remember the generations of winds and rains before them. Their only ancestry is the lab where they were designed. They have been made reliant on gluttony, made flawlessly all the same, made easy to manage until they have forgotten how to remember.

I stand by the ditch after a heavy rain, inhaling the sweet tang of RoundUp, and feel the ache of a home I can't return to. I search the horizon of my grandmother's birthplace, and find nothing. I pour grains of loss into my palm and think — I am the seed.



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To the Indigenous peoples of the Salish Sea who have been stewards of this land for thousands of years



# POETRY WALK

Lipstick smudged  
on her hand the smell  
Of lavender crushed and loved  
all over us  
red toenails  
bluest of eyes  
bluest  
Threat of  
Rain  
far or close it's hard  
To tell, the scent  
the rusted machines  
reassuring you  
Urn clutched like a token  
Of brass bird luck  
Guts spulled from goats  
and lips to these white  
haired wine sippers  
Heart guitar  
rabbit wildfire  
Washburn,  
wash and burn  
Away  
summer, sister  
away

## MALIA'S FAVORITE POEM

Shoe,  
I have goat pictures for you