***Repurpose***

My dog and I traverse a land trust ridge

that keels north-south, humping schist to deal

our longest river an abrupt snub east

before its broad resume down to the sound.

No Chomolungma togs, no lifted man

truck will ever wear this wee pluton’s name,

this dot where I find myself wandering,

no clock, no role, in this hard, orange fall.

We stroll among exempt gentility

who sight fine optics on migratory

flashes, earning yet another check and

chuckling at the blue jay’s keening fracas.

Yet Kodachrome foliage can’t block the

highway thrumming up through this intrusion;

commuter-swarm pulses insistently,

charges uphill through un-defending trunks.

My exulting pup pursues and revels

over this blithe hummock of hunt and snuff;

guarding over his wriggling tender plump

carcass, I try to reincorporate.

**Letter To Coates**

Dear Sir,

Of course, I can’t pronounce your name;

my background is the gym Watusi dance.

You opened with your murdered friend Prince Jones:

holding fresh parchment, found the wrong zip code,

face down on a green suburban chemlawn,

shot by cops out of their jurisdiction.

Frank Robinson is all I can bluff with.

My lakeside Little League heyday only

knew All-Star Oriole, Rushmore profile

shot by Topps, Achebe chief low angle.

This Maine boy, boxes of cards safe under

the bed, red clapboard home with trees all ‘round,

American pastime greenswards at hand,

ignorant of Baltimore and beyond,

knew jack about the things that made Frank scowl,

like strike-zone crowding beanballs taking toll-

just a good card, a Mays, a Yaz, a Rose.

My recess dramas were tightly scripted,

farm-raised teachers patrolling like marsh hawks.

Once Jody Papke and Tammy Martin

ripped and clawed in an engagement of snot

and smear-face wailing that seared and thrilled me

but I can’t bullshit you: I filled up on

tree-shade book time to know Frank was the

only man named MVP in both leagues.

Scribes omitted, imagine that, how folks

down on the Ohio, in Legreeville,

in Schottland, ran his coon ass out of town-

Cincy put that no count jig in his place.

I’ve lived exempt from those struggles, got the

Gold Express Saver Pass to cut that line,

should have given my kids more speeches but

didn’t need to use yours, even in this

age of *Why Can’t We Dominate*? as the

hotel-dwelling golf turd charmingly shrieks.

I did not have to squeeze their hands too hard

on those flowered roads, sporting fields, Christian

bus lanes of smiling teachers, blonde faces

gifting wi-fi sleepovers, excursions,

blockbusterjaunts to ever distant worlds.

One of my towheads reached Ballmer via

*The Wire*: digitized crack pipes, tv blood.

My neck hairs still recall the O.J. cheer

the black kids gave his verdict in my school.

Their cries crossed a gap I had not noticed,

like learning I’ve been neighbors with Oscar

Wao, Rohingya, Manzanar, all these years;

we had studied different Ciceros.

My jocular Juice was too famous to

fail; to them he was not just a football card.

From that far other side of our abyss

the O.J. my tribe saw, also *not* black,

liked him eyes ahead, not *not* looking whence.

Transcend is such a harmless looking verb.

I guess that’s what we snowflakes most expect,

we’ll take, at most, you joining in our club,

hating to lose even one magic bean.

Speaking of beans, we need to break some bread.

You must come to my place, we’ll do pot luck.

Bring your family, anyone you want.

I’ll do Stromboli, linguini with clams.

You bring some Mondawmin grub–represent,

no effete Inner Harbor tourist fare.

I’ll warm up the old Camembert for laughs,

get on your preppy Middlebury French,

subject you to my Duolingo jive.

Haters may hate me for klieg lighting my

virtue, but my hair is gray, my time short;

those Breitbart drones can kiss my libtard ass.

We both have sons who share this world,

who value love, condone tattoos,

are hip hop fans. I like your book.

By magic I’ll produce Frank Robinson,

Bill Russell, too - Bay area elders -

for tales of when these old school cats were kings.

Toni Cade Bambara will take the ghost

chair; we will count down ebonics’ greatest hits,

your clout will get her back on the charts.

Dick Cavett and Dave Chapelle will be there,

to hot wire us if there are any lulls.

To a banging live Bill Evans trio

we’ll analyze Jim’s raft trash talk to Huck,

dissect Miles’ claim that Armstrong was a Tom,

the states of music in this weary land,

Barack Obama’s POTUS legacy,

how your *Black Panther* fits our strange new world.

Once the old folks have to hit the sack,

we’ll embarrass our children with righteous

wooden tennis racket air guitar to

Sky Dog does Willie Cobb does Bo Diddley,

search for who gets appropriated by

*You Don’t Love Me* live from The Fillmore East.

Don’t hate; I learned my Chuck from George and Mick

and Weir; we’ll give T-Bone Walker propers.

I’ll cue a ‘70 *Dark Star*; will you

sneer like Miles or join in my tribal stomp?

You’ll DJ what I need to know of NAS…

I’ve got two decades on you – be forewarned!

Some say love and work are all that matters,

but food and music have been known to heal-

let’s try to forge something from the tatters

of this grand experiment, for keeps, for real.

I hope to see you soon,

Take care,

MA

**Students**

Weightless text summoned me to the ending;

a blue German sports car crouched on the well-

tended driveway, muscular tires gleaming.

The final room, as nice as you could want,

filled with love by his mother and his dog.

We chatted over the shrinking body-

he has had a terrible life, she said.

His laughter slipped like light under a door.

The Master leaving, younger than Jesus,

his hard-packed pit bull mouthed me ardently.

Not clutch enough to go straight to my love,

I retreated to a gone October:

we’d stopped our nimble, feral bikes deep in

a beech glade; low sun mixed leaf-light into

colors that seized our voices; we’d prayed like

Helmand farmers watching dusk bathe their crops.