

## **Fuck / Time**

By Inua Ellams

Once upon a time / Yo-Yo Ma / traveling through Botswana searching for music / crosses a local shaman singing / into the savannah / He rushes to notate the melody / Please Sing Again he requests / to which the shaman sings something else and explains / to the baffled Yo-Yo Ma that earlier / clouds had covered the sun and wild antelope grazed in the distance / But the dial of the world had twirled since / The antelopes had cantered into some other future / The clouds had gone / so the song had to change / had to slough off the chains us mortals clasp everything with / even our fluid wrists / The universe in fact is monstrously indifferent to the presence of man / We are small as moth wing fall / in an orchestra broad as galaxies / playing a symphony Time isn't bothered to fathom / It respects no constant and is always moving on

## **Funeral of the River**

By Merlinda Bobis

I was not here when they buried the river  
When they moved the bank with spades  
The fragrant kamya, the unfurled bandera española  
The bowing bamboo groves, the minty red berries, the earth  
All burying the water.

But I am here now  
Now this road to the rice paddies  
And my feet are bone-dry  
Feeling something coursing underneath  
And into me, the buried river  
Breaking through like blood.

## Top 5 Places in Manila to Check Out While the City Swallows Us Whole

by Jam Pascual

*after [spot.ph](http://spot.ph)*

For when you forget that history is the wage of ruin. Or for when the next white tourist comes over. Either way, how to be presentable in the face of what conquers? Perhaps we can begin with time, which is unkind to flesh and steel, vomits out the topical, but smoothens out the wrinkles of memory, reminds us that what used to be

5) an ocean aeons ago will eventually kiss the skin of the sun. The way we spend our summers here, we flock our feet to sand soft as the body of the next pitying lover willing to house your sorrow in its heat for the night. The alternative is the bay, and the saltwater breeze filtered through the daily revolutions of the ferris wheel. Indigo giving way to neon. Call it development, that luminous promise of the modern. But in case you forget that within spitting distance of the dock is

4) the biggest mall in the country, sitting heavy on this place like a glass crown on the liver-spotted scalp of a withering king, they put an actual globe in the middle of the roundabout, because nothing says united nations like an enclosure of neighbouring casinos, the few remaining smoking areas since that damned Executive Order 26. Yes we have sky lights. Yes our smog is bespoke. Yes it is possible to be lost even when you know exactly where you are, if where you are is the last corner unmolested by the shadow promises of a tiger utopia. And if we're talking about the dark, you can drive to

3) that new speakeasy everybody's raving about, and by everybody I mean, whoever dethroned the yuppies of Gen X from the high council of Gutenberg and gloss. And by the way, it isn't a fucking speakeasy just because it's hard to find. If that were true, I ought to build my own speakeasy, call it After the End of History, or A Day on the Calendar In Which All Your Friends Are Free to Hang, or Decent Fucking Wifi. One time I had this drink called ABC: absinthe, Bacardi, something costly. The language this place speaks is carved from an alphabet of sedatives. Some people say this city was also named after our capacity to thirst—*may dila*—so open wide, big boy, because isn't everything here just

2) a desert mouth calling out to Abraham for a drop of the last typhoon that promised a clean canvas to begin again with. Still, check out this sky deck. Babylon with a penthouse. A view that also gazes into thee. All these stories beneath us and I still can't find a solid metanarrative to ride the dick of. Better luck in the red light district. Better luck in Congress. I'll let you in on a secret: we turn the wheels of the content machine, we deal beauty, we cast pearls into the nooks where so many snouts before have burrowed into for a scrap of what flourishes in decay. May we never forget what sustains us. Let me speak of the Great

1) Jollibee Drought of 2014, and how for weeks there was no golden skin to tear from the savory morsel of all our tiny dreaming, and how back then we didn't know, I'm sorry, we

didn't know the whirring in the back of the kitchen were death rattles, and we were still young enough to believe that turning back time meant we could catch the swing of its nastiest haymakers and throw it down on the mat to twist its limbs and make it consider mercy. No move in the book to get you out of this headlock. Ditch your cyanide molar tactics. It's all teeth.

## **Mama Was Reciting From The Book Of Revelation**

by Jeffrey B. Javier

when tremors ripped the floorboards  
and toppled the shelves full of saints.

Spoon still hanging in my mouth,  
Papa spirited me out into the streets

and cried that the sky was bleeding.  
The millennium was ending and stars

spelled our doom. A dead volcano  
had erupted and dimmed the world.

Storms arrived and washed clean  
the archipelago. Lahar was boiling

in my mouth. We called the names  
of angels and recalled their faces.

Barefoot, we marched blinded,  
our hair powdered in sacred debris:

the ceramic ash fall, consecrated  
dust of fallen saints. In a chapel,

votive candles were lighted. Scents  
and perfumes filled the air: match

sticks igniting, moth wings blazing,  
magnesium burning. Children waited

among the rubble. How the houses  
all lay in ruin and the sight pulverized

my father's heart. How I set his face  
in my head, as solid as a stone,

that he may calcify like a statue,  
as still and as silent as an effigy.

Light carved deep cracks on his face.

His shadow wavered on the walls.

How I sought to save the landscape  
of my childhood, as Mama carried

and swayed me to sleep. How all  
would be rebuilt and the memory

would fade like sand in my dream.  
How I tried my best, lest, I forget.

## **Time as Memory as Story**

By Simon J. Ortiz

*Let's say it's half a century later.*

*Let's say it's never too late.*

*Let's say Skull Valley.*

*Let's say.*

*Let's say it's half a century later.*

*Let's say it's never too late.*

*Let's say Skull Valley.*

*Let's say.*

Time has no mercy. It's there. It stays still or it moves.

And you're there with it. Staying still or moving with it.

I think it moves. And we move with it. And keep moving.

Eleven years old and soon to be in fifth grade. That's time.

Boys' time. Who knows what time it is but them. Eternally.

No one knows time better than they. Always and forever.

Our family. Mama, me, Angie, Gilbert, Earl, Louise.

Kids. Daddy working in Skull Valley for the AT&SF RY.

Mama just packed us up in New Mexico and moved us.

Suddenly. A surprise. To me anyway. To join Daddy.

Who was away most of the time. Arizona. California.

Sometimes Colorado. Sometimes Texas. Always away.

Railroad work, labor, heavy machinery. Rails and sun.

Trains always moving. I remember the war. The 1940s.

Soldiers. Tanks. Cannons with huge guns and wheels.

Time does have mercy. But it doesn't enumerate or wait.

It moves. And we move with it. Though for boys, maybe?

I wanted to wait. So things could happen more gently.

A boy misses his father. A boy watches younger sisters.

And younger brothers. All growing. And he's growing.

And he misses the times his mother is happy, laughing.

Who knows time as well as boys and their young worries?

I was a boy growing within a family, community. And dreams.

And girls. Girl teenagers. I adored them, their pretty ways.

In the fourth grade at McCartys. Made a bookshelf in shop.

Proudly. Sanded. Varnished. Shiny. For my Mama.

With love. I wanted to be a good carpenter like my Dad.

Dad drank though. Dark moods. Dark scary times. Danger.

And words hurtful, abrasive, accusing. Anger, pain, scorn.

A boy wonders. About time. About forever. When it ends.

I loved my Dad. Wonderful. Skilled man. Artist, singer.

Precious and assuring. Yet. Yet. Unpredictable moments.

You can never tell about time either. Like that, it is. It is.

We farmed. Corn, melons, chili, beets, carrots, cilantro.



Onions. Even potatoes in little mounds but they died.

Corn fields at night. Irrigating. June nights. I loved forever.

My grandpa I loved very much. Time was soothing then.

We didn't really need time when days and nights were safe.

And with him they were. A healer and respected kiva elder.

Herded his sheep. Along with my uncle Estevan. And Roy.

Roy was a strange one. Chinese manner. So people said.

From Chinatown in California. He had a gentle soft smile.

And a storyteller he was. Yes. About his horse. Lightning.

Fast and nimble and quick. Lightning, his horse. He'd ride.

Yes, ride to see his girl to call her outside. Estella! Estella!

Stories. I'd listen. The boy I was. Seeing my uncle riding.

Riding his fast and nimble horse. I'd listen and he'd smile.

Memory and time. It doesn't count all the time. Listening.

And because mothers are always loving. Alert. Ever caring.

Mama decided we must go to Skull Valley where Dad was.

Up to Grants, the depot there, we got on the westbound train.

Sacks and boxes, a trunk, suitcase or two. Clothes, things.

What did we have? I don't remember. Not much though.

We never had much. Poor. And lonely for Dad always away.

I wonder. I wonder. Too often that's been the Indian story.

Father gone. Mother and kids left behind. Is it like that?

Yes, too much. Dad didn't like working for the hard railroad.

He'd complain and rant about the crude and mean whites.

The slave rules. The company. Trains powerful, unending.

Time I thought was in the trains. Fast, loud, dangerous.

I was afraid of the powerful trains. Like I said I'd see them.

Soldiers, army troop trains, going east and going west.

Unending. I wondered where they were all going. Where?

Lightning and thunder trapped in the train power and steel.

Yet I yearned for blue song. Hollow and lonely long tone.

Coming round the bend, and something beyond the horizon.

Far away maybe. Travel. Some other dream. Youth. Yes.

I liked songs. Music I heard on the radio. Hank Williams.

And stories that rang through the air. Talk and listening.

It was the first time ever we were leaving the reservation.

Only one world till then it seemed. Acoma community. Ours.

On the edge of another world though, something strange.

And fearful too. The dark moments. Like when Daddy drank.

When there was fire from another world. An unknown.

Yet fascinating somehow, oddly, something on the far horizon.

I didn't remember riding the train before. Ever! Until then.

Like riding thunder. The horse, Lightning, Roy talked about.

Riding off somewhere into the dark night. Fast, fast. Fast.

Riding toward night. We watched the land speeding away.  
Far across the land, along the edge of it was a highway.  
With cars and trucks. Moving, moving. Only slower.

Time speeds, like you speed. Only not an awareness.  
Or any way to tell what is taking place. When young.  
And you're trying to furnish your own answers, solutions.

To mysteries you're anxious about. When all's uncertain.  
Youth is not the time when time is apparent. Too slow.  
Or too fast. And you don't really have clear reasons. Yet.

At Ashfork we got off the train onto the depot platform.  
I sensed being lost. Lost mother and lost children. Dusk.  
Where was this world? Where did home go? Children?

Lost at the edge of a strange world with a gray green depot.  
Large letters painted. Little sister is hungry. She whimpers.  
Mama says, "Hold my hand." We walk, up street, walk, walk.

It could be Indians. A family, mother and children. Lost?  
Where are they going? Up the street I think. Looking.  
For something to eat. My mother held only a little money.

Hamburgers we split. Water and water. Self-conscious.  
Moment is time. I looked out and saw a train passing.  
Our train! I thought it was our train. But it wasn't, just fear!

Wait. Then a train down Chino Valley. Long-distance night.

Stars vanished in too much night. Long day into night.

Where does time go? Does it go nowhere but into night?

Then at the sudden edge. The horizon. A vast bowl of light.

And only at the far end, trees. And still far ahead of us.

The train engine light. Always a light showing the way.

My brother and I excited. A deer stunned by train light.

Stilled. Stark. A cut stone. The dazzling moment held us.

Youth and time. Nothing like it. Thrilled. Never until then.

Years later I tried to tell about that moment to a love.

But love is time too. So. Can't do anything but live time.

The horizon and beyond. Full of stars. Even unseen.

Always belief is firmer than faith. With and without dreams.

We arrived in Skull Valley early in the morning. Three-thirty?

Where were we? On the other side of the moon from Acoma.

A mother and her children and assorted bags and boxes.

Dreams. Time. Horizon. Farther from home than belief.

It felt like that. Within moment when you can't turn away.

A train depot on the other side of the moon. Deserted.

After the train pulled away. Only the rails and starshine.

What's a boy say to his mother? Earlier than anything.

A man whose picture I'd seen. White man. With a cap.

With a visor. Sitting at a tall wooden desk with shelves.  
And a metal puzzle thing making clicking-clacking noises.

Who spoke with Mama. Who smiled. Who wondered at us.  
An Indian woman with Indian children. Who were strangers.  
Like we just came from the planet Acoma. The other side.

Of day. Of the present early morning night in that moment.  
The telegrapher with the visor said. I think. I think he did.  
He knew my father. Knew where he lived. Two miles away.

So we took a road. Early, early morning night trek. Time.  
Shimmers in an odd amazing way. Within what might be.  
A boy and a story. The dawn coming. Horizon ever so near.

When we knocked on his railroad worker housing door.  
Daddy was shocked. In his underwear. Shadows upon.  
And the background of his and Mama's and our history.

We come to discover each other. All failures and gains.  
Counting and mattering, no matter the time or sequence.  
We laugh and hug and cry. Daddy. Daddy. We're here.

Once again together. Family, history, travel, time, love.  
To say what time is, even fifty years in the past to now.  
In this moment, Skull Valley is just as real as it ever was.

Memory we cross and cross again. Treks, trauma, and on.  
We do know what time is. It is loss and gain. A lingering.

Within discovery we come to ourselves. Finding. Destiny.

Moments recalled like friends. It was that way or another.  
We're fairly certain either way. Stories. They are with us.  
Time doesn't forsake. It doesn't soothe or decrease. Never.

Skull Valley. A time for a boy. History engulfed beyond.  
When I went back. Recently. I ate with friends at the cafe.  
By the railroad track. I was fascinated by photographs.

Of the mountain lions in the mountains nearby. Ever there.  
No matter what. And the stories of bones. Tall tales or truths.  
They're told. Apaches, it's said. Wagon trains. Lies or no.

Our history is more than here. We know more than realize.  
We realize what we don't know. Or want to know. Truths.  
Stalk us, just like they found. A boy. More than fifty years ago.

He discovered a world beyond Acoma. A world apart.  
And a world together as time, memory, as story. As his own.  
We seek and are found. Secure. Actual. Safe. And serene.

Last summer near Prescott that boy fifty vast years later.  
Found carved images on stone walls that fit his hands.  
Carved in time. Eternal as stone. Past and present. Ever.

Let's say it is ever an ongoing story.

## **Backwards**

by Warsan Shire

*for Saaid Shire*

The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.

He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life;

that's how we bring Dad back.

I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole.

We grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear,

your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums.

I can make us loved, just say the word.

Give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without consent,

I can write the poem and make it disappear.

Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass,

Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,

maybe she keeps the baby.

Maybe we're okay kid?

I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love,

you won't be able to see beyond it.

You won't be able to see beyond it,

I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love.

Maybe we're okay kid,

maybe she keeps the baby.

Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,

Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass.

I can write the poem and make it disappear,

give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without consent,

I can make us loved, just say the word.

Your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums

we grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear.

I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole,  
that's how we bring Dad back.

He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life.

The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.



(pō)

~

before i first visit [you]  
in ka'a'awa // before  
[we] swim in salt water  
and forage the tide  
for shells \\ before [we]  
learn our body  
languages // before i  
mistake trade winds  
for your hair \\  
before [we] dive  
// before [we] come  
against wreckage \\  
before [we] close  
our eyes to see  
what night asks [us]  
to let go // before  
the emotional  
chickens crow the sun  
risen \\ before vow  
-els and consonants //  
before was pō \\  
the first darkness  
birthing our sea  
of moving islands

(first ocean)

*during the rim of the pacific military exercises, 2014*

~

when [neni] was newborn, [you] rinsed  
her in the sink // pilot whales, deafened

by sonar, are bloated and stranded  
ashore \\ now [you] bathe her in the tub,

clean behind her ears, sing “my island  
maui,” written by your dad // his ashes

scattered in the pacific decades ago  
\\ when [we] bring [neni] to the beach

for the first time, [you] secure her  
to your chest and walk into the sea \\

what will the aircrafts, ships, soldiers,  
and weapons of 22 nations take from [us]

// “i wish she could’ve met my dad,” [you] say \\  
schools of recently spawned fish, lifeless,

spoil the tidelands // is oceania memorial  
or target, economic zone or monument,

territory or mākua // a cold salt wind surges  
\\ [we] shiver like generations of coral reef

bleaching

(i tinituhon)

~

light dilates

mānoa valley and

the ko‘olau mountains

where do islands

end and begin

time spiraling fractions

10 minutes apart

departure destination

swell forecast

“hugua”

eggs boil

sounding lines

measure distances

between stars

lukao

(i tinituhon)

~

wave

sub

traction

2

min

utes

apart

midwife

hands

push

words

“fat

fat”

islands are

endings

and beg

innings

row

crown

vowels

egg

mucus

blood

bile

*my first story*

vocal cords

umbilical chords

*and your*

*first story*

ēwe apuya’

*are woven*

tumuge’ pāpa’

(even our blood

is 90% hānom)

*hunggan*

*hunggan*

*hunggan*

*magahet*

*given* **island of no birdsong**

is the birth of air, is  
the birth of water, is  
a state between  
the origin and  
the end, between  
birth & the beginning of  
another fetid nest

—Charles Olson *from* “The Kingfishers”

~

“day seven : feather tracts visible on back, sides and head”

[we] flock to mass on sundays // grandma kneels and opens the bible as if its pages were wings \\ once i found a clutch of leathery eggs in the hollow of a fallen trunkun niyok : *coconut tree* // “more than two million brown tree snakes have been born on guam during the past 50 years” \\ avian silence // st kevin, tayuyute [ham]

~

“day ten : eyes begin to open, bill all black”

fanhasso studying the endemic marianas crow, or aga, in school // “added to the endangered species list in 1984” \\ “scientists placed electric barriers around nests, built facilities for artificial incubation, and transferred ten wild-caught crows to u.s. zoos for captive breeding” // 10,000 chamorros now live in texas \\ 7,000 in hawai‘i // what does not change

~

in 2011 the last female marianas crow on guam died in captivity  
of kidney failure // her name was mochong \\ she was 12 years  
old // she leaves behind two male aga \\ one lives in captivity  
and the other lives in the confines of andersen air force base in  
northern guam

“kaaa-ah kaaa-ah”

~

“day thirteen : feathers begin breaking through skin”

fanhasso standing in line with grandma to receive the eucharist  
// “body of christ,” the priest says, offering the host in his  
konnai : *hand* \\ “amen,” i respond and open my pãchot : *mouth*  
// even our tongues are 70% hãnom

~

““hu hongge i lina’la’  
tataotao ta’lo åmen””

i want to believe  
in the resurrection of  
our bodies  
because [we] still feel  
ghost limb pain  
where our wings  
once belonged

“o asaina o aniti”



SOMETIMES I CONSIDER THE NAMELESS SPACES

Sometimes I consider the nameless spaces – the here that was here before the invention of doors or houses or cities, the landscape before it was landscaped, just the easy acres of possibility.

I have read it is possible to hear trees breathing. And that they send messages across a complicated network of roots – warnings of insects, and what defences can be used. And it is possible to observe the slow walk of trees, thought it might take you a thousand years to see them inching across a ridge.

If sometimes it is possible to hear trees breathing, can you also hear them catch their breaths before the violence of place? Because isn't place always a violence – the decimation of trees, the genocide of bees, the dislocation of birds, the cutting, the clearing, the paving, the smoothing, the raising up of cement like giant tombstones over the grave of all that was there before.

## **murrispacetime**

**From me** *don't take from me* what this what I been learnin' slowly. Seein' time *stretch out from me* don't take it. I'm seein' slow-stretch-time stretch time before me. *Don't stretch away from me just yet.* Take time.

**You're learnin'** stretchin' my churnin'. Clear me burn-burly knees just *don't take what I been slow learnin' from me.* Take it from the [REDACTED]. *From the [REDACTED] stretch me—I'm learnin'—*

**But not from me.** An' not from tall buildings—they knit *tie me up at me knees—an' not short squat ones made from stones near the sea.* So, shatter them all—*re-knit me knees.* Don't take just them and not just from me. What I'm slowly learning *is that I am not learning* even now even still even soon *I'm stupid.* So, stretch slowly, stupid. *Just don't take it from me.*

**Take it** from them *them who knew just what M C an' E can do—before you-know- an' I-think-I-know-who. I know who the [REDACTED] is for.* Who stretch it so made. *Who don't take it away.* The [REDACTED] stretch *not to cede* just to bounce me back *drag me by me knees.* Don't shatter it please.

***build nothing***  
an' seethe.

**See time see** I'm learning slow so show. *Stow ya yearnin' knit together with me. Crack me knees milk me to the trees.*



**The slower** I get the less I lead. The more I stupid slowly learn the less I know I need to know. Concede to know to learn. Stretch me elastic *bounce back me and flow*. I am less scared *more ready for scarred knees* more snorted at *more steady*—the more I'm slow *the more I'm slowly stretching back*. Timeless future gone lean on my back.

**The further** I carry it the less I dream *the more shattered I am by the growing sea* the more knitted I am to the horror tree *the more ready* the more ready *the more made* the more free. Don't take that from me.

**I'm from it** who from slow knit made me made *slow knit of something just from nothing just*.

## **Australantis**

there's a whole ocean filled with sand  
between what was and what will be

where fish grow wings to climb the sky  
and water birds revert to earth

a stark canvas devoid of view  
not a sand dune nor a tree

only a shell hangs beyond the skyline  
spilling the noise of the in-between