

## THE MIGRATIONS AROUND SUNDAY ELDER MORNING SERVICE

A sound in the back, overdubbed in palms,  
in pounds over muffles, ones over threes,  
in splintered back sounds that hang in the air  
above the faintness of cries above glass.

*Someone's crying Lord, come by here.*

An echo at the end, it shadows  
gold columns, stadium accoutrements,  
stained windows whose slants  
shadow the shearwaters going south.

*Someone's singing Lord, come by here.*

A rumble of patterns amplifying witness  
of backwoods hitting backwoods.

*Someone's singing Lord, come by here.*

*Oh Lord, come by here.*

Their cross patterns rumble when the bishop calls  
them to share in Sunday witness.

*Oh Lord, come by here.*

Cross patterns weave a hidden estuary  
the pulse of both flight and exile  
the toll of movement and sunless ends  
decipherable to those who fly and holler  
decipherable to unsettlers in temporal promised lands  
made of painted straws.

*Oh Lord, come by here.*

Disruptors, their patterns call for home  
among ice and isolations.

A circle among the straight pew lines  
an endpoint in the wilderness.

*Oh Lord, come by here.*

POLICE ACCOST HOMEBOY AT THE CHESTNUT BRIDGE  
TALKING TO HIS GRANDMOTHER ABOUT NEPSIS  
AND THE RESURRECTION

“It was the second day his father rested.  
Disbelievers swept the city for witnesses.  
Cocks crowed to the minute, loved ones hid  
but could not part with any more blood.  
In the second Passover, they could not sacrifice  
for the hell of the absurd called judgment.

But the sisters rose and made a night of falcon wings.  
And the wailing women turned into hawks  
that transmogrified in howl the earth’s axis  
that burned white hieroglyphs that flew over rocks  
to make their cave enclosure sign.

And after their circle came and left  
the son, upon his return, was swept  
by cartographers masquerading as friends,  
idolaters waving their wild cut palms  
to block him from the arms of his mother.  
Blocked from the heresies of Magdalene’s arms  
the son kept his head on a swivel.  
The father, again, turned his depravity to myth.  
The son, once again, dreamed of his exit.”

## UNCLE MILTON AND AUNT HELEN BY THE OCEAN SHORES WIND HAVING A FISH FRY

*(with a nod to specific words of Susan Ross, Sky Curtis, and Rebecca Hershey)*

The elders flip their cooking bags  
then bow their heads to the water.  
The fish fry and the Boombox call  
all tricksters and kinfolk coastal,  
blissfully dripping new-old days  
in the form of a new-old social.  
The sea holds memory in shadow tags  
that make myths out of new markers  
and broadsides of old barges.  
Brooks and sounds hold collisions in rivers  
in all things wreathed in sea wracks  
crisp edges blur conceits of gods  
and those that call on them.

The elders are  
the resolvers of the spices and the drums  
the eyes that re-course accepted absurdities  
afflicting turtles and the fishers  
the counters to constructed sails  
in swag that blasts to sea basins  
the new tricksters that subvert in offers  
of their takes and feed to nature.  
Ghosts that slept through spices shake  
their heads though the couple still offer.  
The elders flip their cooking bags  
then bow their heads to the water.

## PORTRAIT OF HOMEBOY CORNERED BY TITUS'S CRACKHEAD SONS AS HE IS TRYING TO GET HOME

The medium traps of yarn and fable  
concoct the Smoking Sons.  
In their pantomime of pleading, candor  
becomes lethal  
in their fried plots and indecipherable structure.  
Plausibility by colonnade of guns  
transcends all bluster  
by 45's and bulging eyeballs.  
By 45th Street, and in unconcentric circles,  
the old boys whine about Mother.

Bugged, they tell you she was a killer.  
Bugged, they corner you and light their burners,  
then ask if you just saw her  
then tell you how the black man corrupted her  
on the banks of the old James River  
then tell you how pain made them smokers  
on blocks of blue and blood-red wrath  
then tell you their story transcended the writer's  
and how he slurred their father,  
and how he made them monsters.  
(They tell you this while blocking your path).

Hold your mouth, Homeboy, at their guns  
and their smoking royal visions.  
Hold your tears, Homeboy, when they complain  
of disbelieving New England witches  
of havoc through woods in Southern Nights  
and police that took care of their snitches.  
Inscrutable madness is divinest street sense  
for junkie ghosts wanting absolution.

Hold your mouth, Homeboy, then run, run.  
The tar that held your kinfolks  
is the tar that still holds their dope.  
Hold your mouth with old grins and lies.  
Live to speak honestly on other days.  
Leave old boys to their violent reveries  
or they'll catch, kill, and rewrite you.

MRS. MIRIAM AND UNCLE MOE: 7 A.M.

“Love, dear Love, you are the Yellow to my Blue.  
All that lives and grows here makes a space for us.  
All that is between us builds and spins-  
'til all burdens and boulders are something bearable.  
In our margins, one voice comes from all voices.  
In our sentences, shared disintegrations  
synthesize and cohere in fleeting moments.  
In our responses, joy and anguish's currents  
take in all sense of madness and lucidity,  
take in all solace, serenity, and sorrows  
(the elements and firmament and feeling).  
Together we take them and strip them of agonies.”  
“Moses and Miriam quit your fooling around downstairs.  
Jesus Christ, not when the boy's eating.”

## ROBERT LASHLEY

**Robert Lashley** is a 2016 Jack Straw Fellow, Artist Trust Fellow, and nominee for a *Stranger Genius Award*. He has had work published in *The Seattle Review of Books*, *NAILED*, *Poetry Northwest*, *McSweeney's*, and *The Cascadia Review*, and his poetry was also featured in such anthologies as *Many Trails to The Summit*, *Foot Bridge Above The Falls*, *Get Lit*, *Make It True*, and *It Was Written*. In 2019, *Entropy Magazine* named his first collection, *The Homeboy Songs*, one of the 25 essential books to come out of the Seattle area. His most recent collection, *Green River Valley*, was published in June 2021.