

# IS THIS FOREVER, OR WHAT?

Poems & Paintings from Texas

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Selected by *Naomi Shihab Nye*

greenwillow books  
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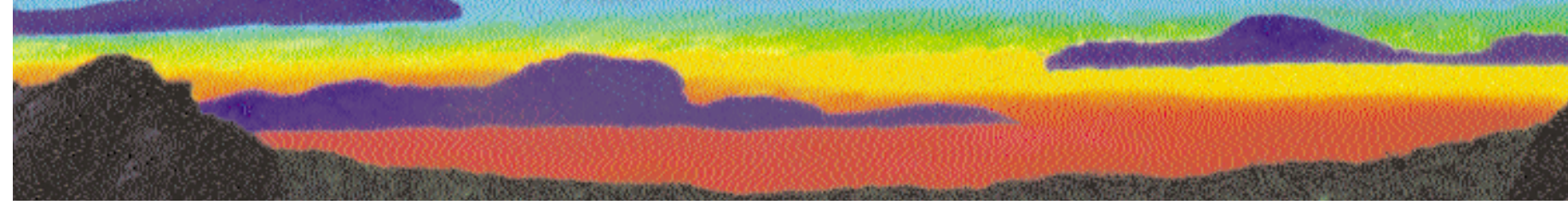
## Praise to That Which

Does not need us to praise it  
To the oceans—deep—before—and after us  
To mountains (despite quarries)  
To rivers (despite dams)  
To waterfalls and national forests  
To the very air (threatened by us)  
To the earth and its strong song  
(May we learn her words—and sing along)  
and praise what we do not yet understand  
allow it to live within our little fenced lands.

Thom the World Poet



*Restina hummer*  
MELANIE FAIN



## “THEIR LIFE, THEIR JOY”

The Line of Days



## At the Surplus Supply

a shadow cast  
by a lone pecan  
makes welcome shade  
in this August heat

when a slight  
breeze helps to bear  
the waiting here  
where the used furniture

has found its way  
out of date  
cracked & chipped  
a broken leg

cyclopians computers  
blinded as if by an  
Odyssean stake  
all have landed in



*Beyond the Pale*  
JULIE SPEED

this warehouse of  
the institutional discard  
though at times  
an item will be

recycled & upon a  
day like this  
one in need  
of table or chair  
comes to look them over  
those have been replaced  
to view them once it opens  
waiting beneath this single tree

its rough bark coated with  
a curry-colored lichen  
limestone at its roots  
standing here outside

in the midst of slabs  
rusting metal in orange &  
red gradations beside the  
drought-bleached grass

now stunted & stiff  
the research labs nearby  
for structural engineering  
or archeological digs as

it drops Algonquian fruit  
for those will hunt & shell  
for baking pies & pralines  
a taste forever satisfies

whose cool relief from  
a blinding summer sun  
can never get enough of  
will never go out of style

Dave Oliphant

## Cold Sauce

Every morning, every night,  
I take the can of cat food from the fridge,  
pry off the red plastic lid and peer  
into the amber slime surrounding the mush.  
Fumes of fish parts and meal rise  
to mingle with the urgent cries.  
I pour dry pellets into two bowls,  
then divide the wet food—two plops—  
and cover each round hard bit  
with fragrant meaty sauce.  
They hate the dry food alone,  
but this concoction they devour,  
crunching through the bad hard kernels,  
licking at the cold sauce, and even its  
memory.  
I stir and think, and stir and think,  
“This is their life, their joy.”  
I can almost hear myself meowing.

Carol M. Siskovic

## something

I look to you  
keyboard  
to say something to me  
to bring me some intuitive wisdom  
to console me, construct me,  
converge me  
to send me a message through  
my fingers  
and your page  
to reveal something  
I wish I already knew.

I look to you  
mailbox  
to bring me something wonderful  
to bring me something special  
to change my life  
to put something priceless  
in my hands

that perhaps is already there  
but I have no way of seeing.

I look to you  
telephone  
to transmit some important message  
to my ear  
to give me news  
good news  
to make a connection  
between me right here right now  
and me someplace  
in what I can be  
and might become yet  
but am still a stranger to.

I look to you  
new day  
perhaps tomorrow  
perhaps tomorrow  
always waiting for something  
something  
to happen.

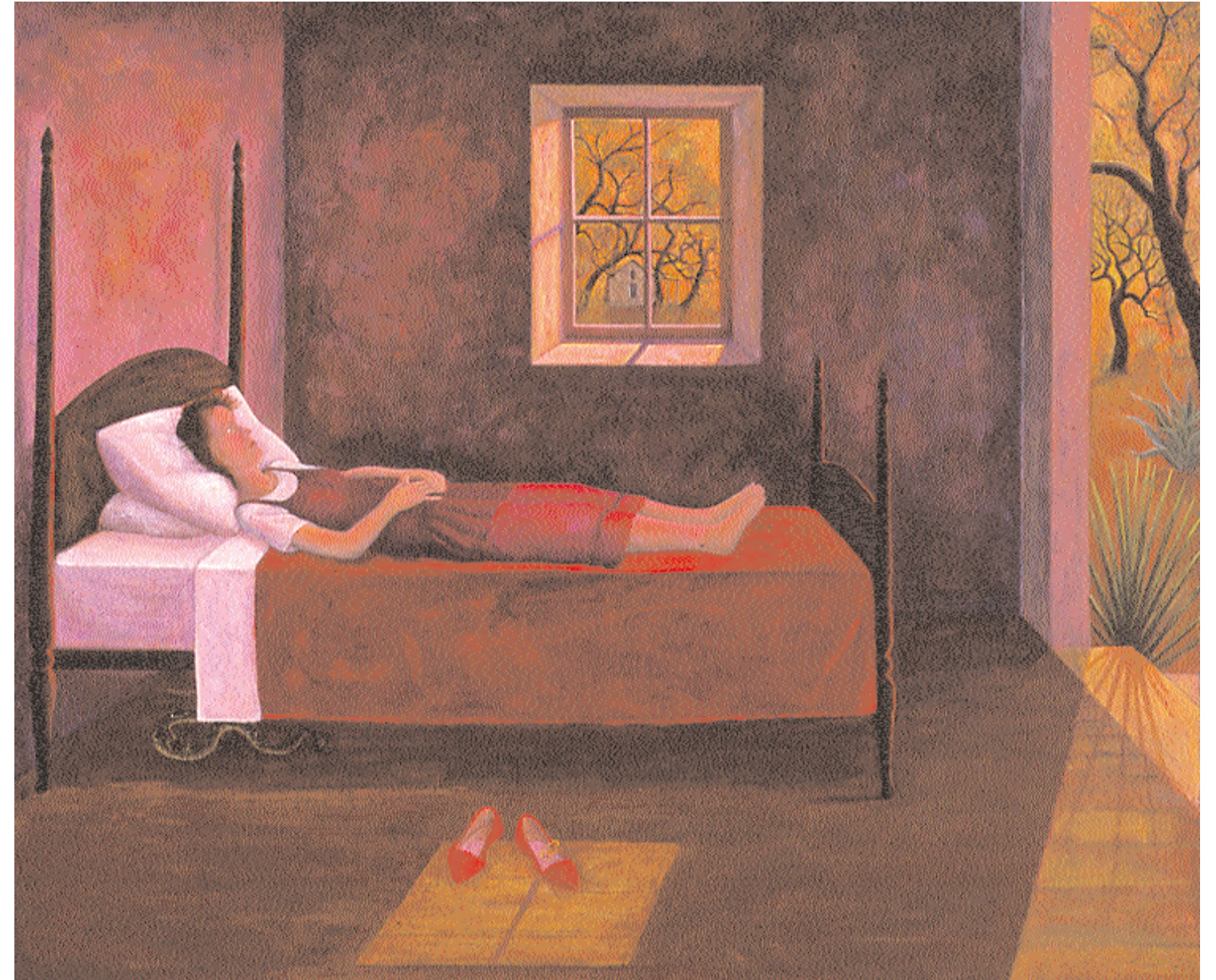
Carmen Tafolla

## Sweet Dreams

Voices fade as he walks  
into them. He hears his name  
in the air above him, passed  
from parents to guests  
and back to him like a ball.  
The plates have faces. In his  
father's he sees his own.  
The candle's shadow is talking  
and laughing with the wall.  
There are kind questions  
for him, shared silences he hears  
himself speak into: he blinks,  
whispers to the floor,  
a small fist blooms with years  
he's stored in fingers. Somewhere

in their watches are the hours  
he can't enter. In awkward  
pauses some stare into his sleep.  
A red-nailed finger slowly circles  
the rim of a glass, but the red  
bell of wine won't sing.  
They look at him and smile.  
His mother stands, her hand enclosing  
his. His father's cheek cuts  
into his kiss. The hardwood floor  
shines eyes of light. The dark  
doorway is the wall's yawn.  
He walks into their wishes.

Christian Wiman



*Dream of Texas*  
DEBORAH MAVERICK KELLY

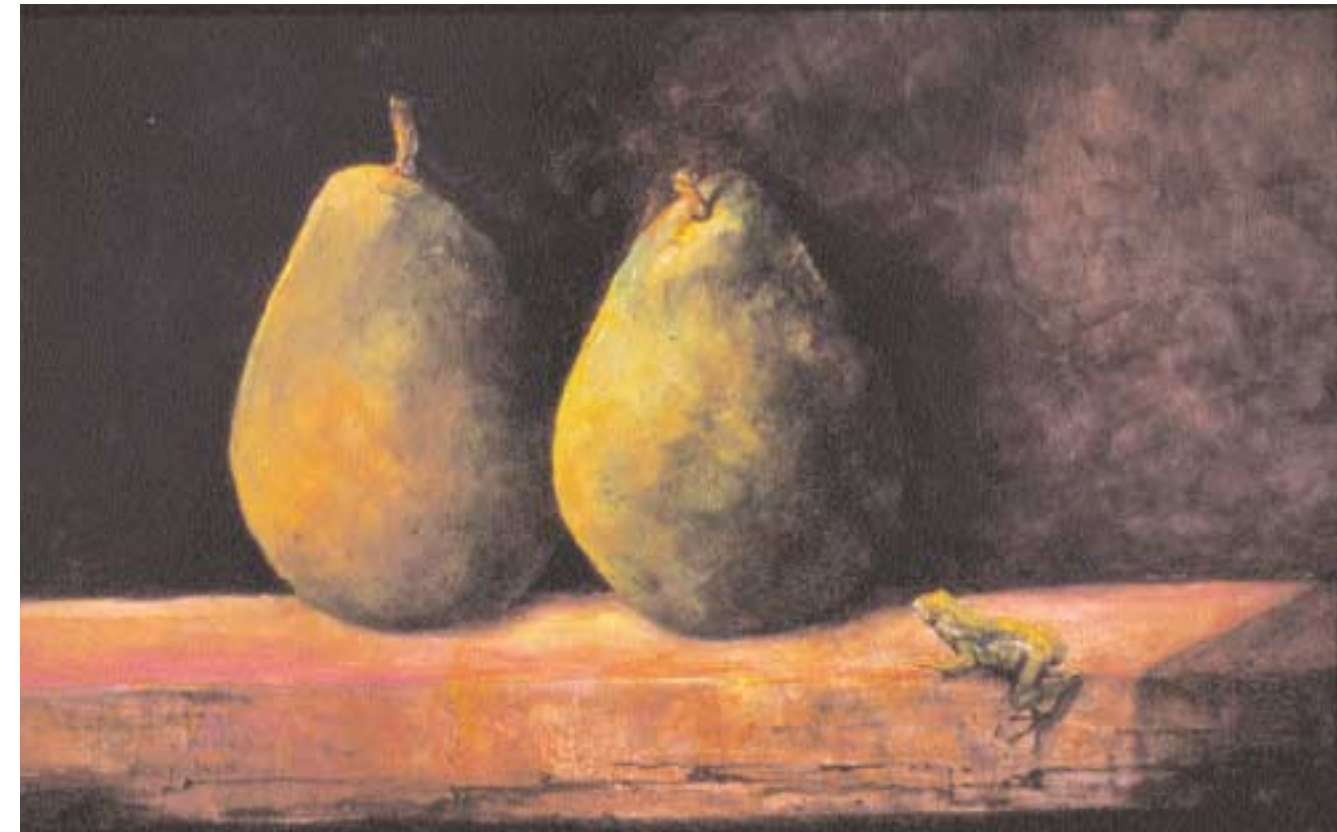
## The Angus Martyr

Fifty years past, he had watched a cow drown itself  
rather than be herded into a pasture bordered by rusty fences.  
A black Angus pledged herself to the ancient mud  
of the brown Rio Grande while the boy yelled  
“come back” from far away across the dry land.

The cow had come from Mexico where there were no  
fences and the thing went down into water preferring  
the regions without wire. As a man, the boy  
would remember often that sad Angus martyr,  
he would rise up out of his sleep with the suspicion  
that miles away cows were lowing at the moon in pain,  
he would fall back only to dream of cows,  
how nightly they broke through fences like a part of him  
with their stupid bodies and enormous heads.  
He would have a son born with a long, furry tail  
like a cow's, and together they would build fences  
because fences are the sufferings that must be built.  
After a day of stretching barbed wire across cedar  
the boy that became the man would drink black coffee  
while his son out in the pasture would call  
to the cows to come lick at the salt blocks,  
calling with a deep animal sound stirring in his lungs.

The fences went out like lines that never finish  
and every night some beast would try that tension  
letting the fences ring, post to post across the land.  
And every night the man would tell his son  
about the tail he had been born with, its gentle fur  
when they cut it off just after the child's birth,  
and about the great black head of that Angus bobbing up  
out of the Rio Grande, black hide glistening with mud.

John Phillip Santos



*Green Pears  
and Tree Frog*  
ANDREA PEYTON