

Joanne Diaz

Ode to the Ice Cream Truck

When we ate your confections, we ate the Cold War,
the paper wrappers of Sweet Freedom,

Bomb Pops, and Bullets littering every sidewalk
as if in the aftermath of an explosion. You

were the vehicle that petroleum built to roam
the streets, the cathedral to corn syrup

that galvanized the golden light of late afternoons,
and we were ecstatic, expectant, an atoll

of bikinis who, in our alliance, could create a crisis
wherever we went—our bodies radiated more heat

than any hydrogen explosion. You were our link
to a history of non-fossil fuels: the goat

that pulled carts of ice cream through every narrow
street in the Lower East Side; the boy vendor

who shouted the early hue and cry of *I scream*
for ice cream! and later, the chime box that rang

a doleful, fading version of Scott Joplin's
"The Entertainer," that ragtime favorite written

by the man who glowed against the misery
of his past. In a world of gas and nitrogen,

you became a cocktail of syrup, blue exhaust,
red dye #40, ragtime, ragweed, Good Humor haze

in the sprinklers that waved fans of water
above green grass saturated with artificial fertilizers.

Now, when I see you approach, my toddler is in my arms,
and you seem more like sarcophagus than cathedral.

It's taken so many wars to sustain you, and yet we
can barely taste the blood, what with all that sweetness.

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Joanne Diaz is the recipient of fellowships from the Illinois Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Sustainable Arts Foundation. She is the author of *My Favorite Tyrants* and *The Lessons*, and with Ian Morris, she is the co-editor of *The Little Magazine in Contemporary America* (University of Chicago Press, 2015). She is an Associate Professor of English at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Angie Macri

After Beauty is Found Sleeping

Don't speak of your dreams anymore
no matter how real they seem.
What mother says is for good reason:
seven crowns from another kingdom
where mice rule over men, where curses
are as real as dolls with blue eyes
unlike their own. The girl locks
her jaw and finds a sword, the cut
on her arm finally healing in sugar plums
made in heat around seeds. Her mother
has no idea and doesn't want to know.
She gives the girl another doll
with eyes that open on rising.
A palace is more than cold in winter
when everyone outside is hungry.

Please send jaws that open a dream
as loud as ice on the river breaking.
When a man asks for your hand, it stands
for all of you. Here is the sword,
a promise of marriage, nothing as ugly
as the glass her mother took from her arm
without wanting to hear its real origin,
assuming it came from fever. Not sick?
Then she should practice the song older
than all of them. She should play it
from memory. She learns by watching
her father: the oil of her skin will ruin
the blade if she's not careful. She will be
where spring means plum trees in the garden
yet to bear what winter's hands will offer.

Angie Macri is the author of *Underwater Panther* (Southeast Missouri State University), winner of the Cowles Poetry Book Prize, and *Fear Nothing of the Future or the Past* (Finishing Line). Her recent work appears in *Cimarron Review* and *Prairie Schooner*. An Arkansas Arts Council fellow, she lives in Hot Springs.

Esteban Rodríguez

Meat

As I run my hand along the long display case
stacked with columned slabs of meat,
my cold reflection blurs between every nose-,
check- and palm-printed smudge, and warps
across the sharp and uncleaned scree of ice,
where half-packed and scattered like rusted
pawn-shop jewelry – like yard sale items
a day’s worth of eyes have yet to want –
lie pork chops, sausage-links, bacon strips
and mounds of bone-in and boneless beef,
as well as chicken breasts, legs and feet,
and ambiguous, primal cuts draped in a quilt
of seasoned salt. Even with the small and split
carcasses hanging in the back, or the bags
of charcoal pressed against my knees,
the market’s staleness stems mainly from
the butcher himself, that sweaty, middle-aged
and mustached man who’s *How much?*
spills across the counter like a contradiction,
because as low and disinterested as it sounds,
as detached from the art it appears it once was,
it’s still a voice my father and I know to trust,
still focused on weighing the right amount,
and wrapping the few pounds we take home,
where we watch my nightgowned mother cook
each piece till they mirror the coarseness
of coffee grounds, and where with each bite,
I’m reminded that like the acres of grazing cattle
we passed on the drive back from town,
my own body is nothing more than meat,
than a sweaty figure slipping into the bedroom
after dinner, lying next to an overworking fan,
as my face, unimpressed by the blades’ speed,
puddles down my jaw, and breathes the night’s
humidity through the window mesh, fevering
my flesh until I’m no longer tender, raw.

Esteban Rodríguez holds an MFA from the University of Texas Pan-American and his poetry has appeared in *The American Literary Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Nashville Review*, *Sugar House Review*, and *Chicago Quarterly Review*. He lives in Austin, Texas.