



EarthSpeak Magazine

**Issue 5
Autumn 2010**

EarthSpeak Magazine
Issue 5: Autumn

Presented by EarthSpeak Press
(An Imprint of Seven CirclePress)

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Cover Photo: Heron on Fall Riverbank taken by April Bullard

Published 2010 by EarthSpeak Press (An Imprint of Seven CirclePress)

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Lyssa Tall Anolik

Lyssa Tall Anolik teaches creative writing in Portland, OR. She holds an MFA in Writing from Vermont College and a BS in Forestry from the University of Washington. Her work has appeared in the VoiceCatcher anthologies, *4 and 20*, *Curly Red Stories*, and *The Wild*.

Animals

We need to invite them into our homes—
to guide us back to our meaty selves
on padded paws and clicking nails.
Lead us to the wildness flickering
behind our books,
beneath piles of clothes and papers,
between the glasses and the good china.

Let the animals loose in your house—
the coyotes and cougars, the rabbits and jays.
The crows and squirrels who shriek and screech.
The mongooses, spiders and snakes.
The salamanders and frogs, slippery and wet.

Let them show you
how to nest and burrow,
how to hunt, which berries are good for eating.
How to drink, not from the tap,
but from rain-fed rivulets.

We need their fur and feathers, their quills and spines.
We need to learn how to swing
through the trees and lope through the desert.
How to walk again on all fours,
sniffing the earth for clues to where
we long ago buried our animal hides.

We need to don that skin and scream
like Hawk and bay like Wolf,
sing out our territory,
and mate with abandon,
feathers flying, fur and flesh yes-ing,
unafraid.
We need the animals to move into our homes
and make a mess of things.

Clay Beads
(A New Creation Myth)

The Clay-River Goddess lives in the wild rain forests of the Amazon that exist in the dreams of jaguars, tapirs, and crocodiles. She was the goddess of the silt-laden, slow-moving waters that snaked through the jungles when the rivers were dreams that carried people to distant places, into the hearts of themselves. The people knew that the vine-tangled trees, the clay-filled waters, and the animals who shared their world, were the stuff their own bodies were made from.

Women from the long ago time gave thanks to the Clay-River Goddess by rolling beads out of the river bank. The beads of wet clay were the same color as the women's clay-colored fingers. Pudgy women rolled pudgy round beads, and long slender women rolled long slender beads. They set them to dry in the sun on a flat gray rock beside the water and chased the monkeys away, because the monkeys liked to steal the beads and throw them at each other, then put them in their mouths like small children to taste their round, smooth grittiness.

The women kept watch over the beads and sang creation songs about a time, even longer ago, when the Clay-River Goddess shaped the First Ones from the river, rolling them between her flat palms and reshaping them again and again from tapirs to jaguars, macaws to otters, crocodiles to tree frogs, and finally into humans, so the people knew they were all of these beings, malleable and pliant with clay skins.

When the beads were dry, the women tinted them with ochre pigment, ground from red river stones, then painted each with a different creature. They strung the finished beads onto twisted plant fibers and wore them around their necks to remember everyone they were, so the vine-tangled, river-tangled forest would continue to dream itself.

Evergreen

When I stepped into
the belly of the tree
stones grew on my
toenails and moss
covered the soles
of my feet. Roots
sprouted from my
legs and crawled
among earthworms
and decay. My hair acquired
nests of sticks and twigs,
to house hawks, owls, and eagles.
The birds took flight,
a mess of falling feathers
and screeches, and it's
as if I, too, had been given wings
to fly into another country. My feathered
leaves carried me over granite and ice,
into a valley within my own cells and woody
sinew. But I did not move. I remained for
a long green age, until my heart pumped sap,
lichen grew on my eyelids, and my fingers became
fir cones, my seeds stolen in the mouths of squirrels.
My toes twist in the sweet black soil.

April Bullard

April Bullard resides with her husband aboard their houseboat near Vancouver, Washington. She creates work inspired by living cradled on the magically reflective surface and tumultuous undercurrents of the Columbia River as an artist, photographer, poet, and musician.

April Bullard

Beach Offerings



Heron on Fall Riverbank



EarthSpeak Magazine

Captured Leaves



Sarah Doyle

Sarah Doyle is a Fiction Writing major at Columbia College Chicago. She is originally from Southern California, but has been enjoying the crazy and exciting Chicago weather for the past four years. She has previously had a flash fiction piece titled “The Thief” published in a Columbia created zine called *Thumbs and Knuckles*.

Like An Orchestra

"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous."

- Aristotle, Parts of Animals

My dad and I sat on our customary lawn chairs in my cool garage on a warm June evening, as day turned to night, just like we always did when a storm was brewing. Our street looked out onto Columbine Avenue and then farther out to the park across the street. Our house was on the only street in the neighborhood that wasn't a cul-de-sac, so we got a view of the entire park. To the left you could see the baseball diamonds that belonged to Macarthur Middle School and to the right were more houses, all on cul-de-sacs. Straight in front was a huge playground, set into an even bigger sandbox. I looked out to the sky, twilight bleeding into nighttime, a small strip of blue sinking into the horizon. Off to the left, a wall of black clouds crawled slowly across the sky, turning everything dark, as if something was dragging it across the night sky.

I wiggled around in the lawn chair, feeling the scratchy plastic rub up against my bare, nine year old thighs. I looked up at my dad, noticing his prominent profile and the equally as prominent bump in his nose. I have that bump, too. I had always hated it, but had grown to love it as I got older because it was my Dad's nose; it made me look like him. Even my brother has the exact same nose and he is only my half brother; he has half of someone else's genes entirely and yet, he too got the Doyle nose. My dad held a black coffee mug in his hands, periodically taking a long, thoughtful sip. I picked up my cup too, full of warm apple juice, mimicking his sips, watching him closely. He set his coffee mug down on the concrete floor and scooted his lawn chair closer to the edge of the garage entrance. I set down my cup and scooted after him, the sound of the scraping metal on concrete following me. I looked up at him again as he stared out to the skies in front of us. He looked back down at me, smiled and said "Pay attention, goofball!", as he pointed out to the park. A quick flash of bright, white lightning lit up the sky.

My dad and I sat and watched the lightning crash to Earth and the rain beat down on the pavement. He was one of the few people in my life who understood my obsession with storms. He encouraged me to sit in our two car garage, staring at nothingness, waiting for something to appear. He almost got it when I told him I wished we lived in Kansas, because nothing exciting like a tornado ever happens in California.

“Well, what about earthquakes?” he would pose to me.

“Oh, those don't count.” I'd retort.

He made a very valiant effort to understand when in high school I told him I wanted to study meteorology at the University of Oklahoma. And, despite the fact that I never made it to The Sooner State, my love and fascination with storms has never diminished. My father always encouraged that, and it started with those nights, sitting in our garage, watching nature.

Another wave of white light crashed down through the clouds and I moved a little closer to the edge of my chair. My dad pointed out farther ahead as skinny bolts of electricity crashed, boomed and banged in the sky. Lightning, despite its visible origin from the clouds, doesn't start in the sky alone. It begins as negative electrons in the storm clouds and underneath, in the ground, are positive electrons. As the clouds pass over the ground, the opposite electrons attract and “nature tries to bridge the gap between positive and negative charges by sending out a stream of electrons from the bottom of the cloud through the air towards the positive charges.”¹ I watched as the lightning struck the earth with such force, like it was angry and mean. I remembered learning briefly in school about Zeus, the king of the sky in Roman and Greek mythology. His symbol was the thunderbolt which is the traditional expression of lightning, mostly used in mythology and any representation of electricity. I remembered the story of Salmoneus and how Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt for impersonating him. I didn't like to think about lightning as something destructive because I always thought it was beautiful. But then I remembered my mom telling me about Mother Nature, the anthropomorphized representation of nature. The word nature comes from the Latin word *natura*, which means birth, which is originally where that image came from. She always felt

like the antithesis of Zeus: loving, kind, and beautiful, like my own mother. It made me wonder who truly ruled the skies. I looked over at my father who was still staring out intently at the lightning.

“Dad, what do you think about when you watch storms?” I asked.

“I don't think sweet pea. I just watch.”

The warm June night started to turn chilly, so my Mom brought me out my bright yellow rain jacket. She had just brought it back from the dry cleaners that day, so the soft inside smelled clean, but the waterproof yellow outside still smelled perfectly like plastic. The storm still raged on outside and our garage framed it all as if we were watching it on a big television screen. I turned around to see my Mom standing in the door leading back into the house, her short brown hair tied haphazardly back into a ponytail. She had an apron on with blotchy splashes of flour all over it. I smiled at her and she smiled back. She, too, loved to watch the beauty of nature, but always let my Dad and I have our time on our lawn chairs in the garage. She went back inside, the smack of the screen door following her as I focused my attention back to the storm.

A crash of thunder echoed all around me, moving from one side of the sky to the other, like surround sound. As I felt it reverberate in my chest, I held my hand up to my heart, checking to make sure it was still beating. My Dad and I looked at each other at the same time; he had his hand at his chest, too.

“It feels like it's all around us. It sounds like it's everywhere.” I said to him.

“You know there is a way to know almost exactly how far away the storm is?” my dad asked.

“Nuh-uh! How?” I said inquisitively, as I sat up straight, as if to challenge what my Dad had just said.

“Yup. When you see the lightning, count until you hear the thunder. Every three to four seconds is a mile.” My Dad said, as he pointed out to the clouds, as if to conjure up the lightning himself.

Light actually moves at a significantly faster speed than sound in air, which is why you count until you hear the thunder after you see the lightning. Because sound travels at roughly 1125 ft/second, it means that it's actually three to four seconds that amounts to one mile away. Thunder can't even exist without lightning. When lightning strikes, "the air around it is ionized and superheated to an incredible fifty-four thousand degrees Fahrenheit...this sudden heating and ionization causes the air to expand so fast that the air forms a shock wave."² The sky is a beautiful symphony and the instruments rely on each other to make that music.

As soon as I saw the next bolt of lightning drill into the earth, I began counting 1...2...3...4...5 and then came the roll and clap of the thunder. I gasped and looked at my Dad, enraptured in the moment.

"Five seconds Dad! That means it's.....about a mile and a half away!" I shouted out.

"Good job sweet pea!" he said.

"That is pretty close, right?" I asked.

"It most certainly is. Let's count again in a minute and see how fast it's moving." he said.

I waited with baited breath, anticipating the next streak to come. As soon as it flashed, I shut my eyes tightly and started to count 1...2...3...4 and then again came the roll and clap of the thunder, this time louder than before. My eyes widened and my mouth gaped open with amazement.

"Dad! It's moving! Now it's only a mile away!" I exclaimed. My dad smiled at me, his skin wrinkling up at the corners of his mouth. He laughed without making any noise; his shoulders shaking a little. I couldn't believe that I was able to tell just how far away the storm was from me and my Dad and just how fast it was moving. I felt like I was right there in the storm, riding along in the clouds with it. I suddenly had a thought.

"Dad, what happens when the storm gets right above us? Like, what if I count and there aren't any seconds between the lightning and the thunder?" I asked.

“Well, the house and maybe the park could get struck by lightning.” he said, very matter-of-factly. I stared at him with my eyes blazing wide open and my mouth drooped down a bit at the corners. My Dad noticed the apparent fear in my facial expression.

“Don't worry Sarah. You can't get struck by lightning when you are indoors. It's very rare to get struck by lightning even when you're outside.”

Lightning, while not a leading cause of death among any age, sex, or racial group, isn't as rare a cause of death as one might think. The National Weather Service reported 3,239 deaths caused by lightning strikes between 1959 and 1994. A lightning strike can deliver about three hundred kilovolts of electricity, whereas a “typical industrial electric shock is 20 to 63 kilovolts.”³ Despite this ridiculous amount of electricity running through your body, most strike victims are not electrocuted, but die of cardiac arrest. This is because the strike only lasts a few milliseconds. Even if you don't die immediately after you are struck, you can experience kidney problems later on in life from the deep burns that are a result of the lightning. Most people who are struck by lightning are left with a long, red mark somewhere on their body.

“Are you sure I can't get struck by lightning inside Dad?” I asked, in all seriousness.

“Yes, Sarah. I am positive.”

“Because, I really love lightning, but I don't ever want to meet it face to face.”

“I think that is a valuable lesson to remember Sarah: Nature is beautiful, but just as destructive. You have to remember how powerful it is.”

“I know Dad.”

“Well, I think that is a perfect note to end the evening on.”

I shot my Dad a look of disappointment, putting my balled up fists on my hips and frowning my brow at him. He pointed at the clock on the side of the garage and I turned my head to see what time it was. It was 10:15 and well past my bedtime. As soon as I realized that, the tiredness crept up on me. A yawn started in my ribs and worked its way up my chest and into my elbows and then I was stretching

my arms up to the sky and letting out a long sigh as the yawn escaped from my mouth. My

Dad grabbed the two lawn chairs and placed them over to the left, by the golf clubs and the fishing rods. He took my hand as we walked back into the house. I turned my head back around and caught one last glimpse of the lightning as the garage door slowly creaked closed.

“1...2...3”

1. Randy Cervený, Freaks of the Storm: From Flying Cows to Stealing Thunder The World's Strangest True Weather Stories. (New York: Thunder's Mouth P, 2005.), 71
2. Cervený, 53
3. NASA, When Lightning Strikes People.

Dixon Hearne

Dixon Hearne teaches and writes in southern California. His work has been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and his new book, Plantatia: High-toned and Lowdown Stories of the South, is nominated for the 2010 PEN/Hemingway award and recently won the 2010 Creative Spirit Award-Platinum for best fiction book. Other work appears in *Post Road*, *Cream City Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Roanoke Review*, *The Louisiana Review* and other magazines and journals. He is currently at work on poetry and short story collections.

After the Hunt

At the end of a worn path
Lies an ancient stream
Dappled with rocks
Of many colors
That glimmer prayers
In the morning sun.
They come to scrape
The heaping carcasses,
Divide the parts
Into their many uses—
Hides for clothing, shelter,
Flesh for consumption,
Bones and teeth for arrows,
Horns and hooves
Carved and polished
Worn in homage
To fallen creatures
Whose very lives
Sustain our kind,
Their spirits released
To the four winds,
To roam the land again
In the eternal
Dance of life.

Under Peigan Skies

When tipi poles
Scarred the prairie in the hunt,
When the people were part of the seasons,
When the land was green with beargrass
Before the tribal wars
And broken vows,
When rivers ran clear as sky,

When spirits spoke in cool whispers
From the peaks of Ninastiko,
When deer and bear were plenty
Before the land was carved and divided
And the sacred mountains claimed away,
The first people were here.
We are here still.

Wynne Huddleston

Wynne Huddleston's poetry has been or will be published in the *Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Pond Ripples Magazine*, *Raven Chronicles*, *Grandmother Earth XVII*, *Waterways*, *The Stray Branch*, *Poets for Living Waters*, *From the Porch Swing*, *Victorian Violet Press*, *THEMA*, *Camroc Press Review*, *Gemini Magazine*, *Emerald Tales*, *joyfull!*, *Enchanted Conversation*, *The Shine Journal*, and *New Fairy Tales Anthology*.

Ms. Huddleston is the 1st Place Winner in the Environmental Division of the 2010 Grandmother Earth National Contest.

Her website is <http://wynnehuddleston.wordpress.com/>.

Seeding False Hope

You inject me with hope
as false as the seeding of clouds.
Chemicals are shot inside, their poison
spreads, pervades the atmosphere
until a man-made rain invades
the beautiful, clear, blue weather
in God's previously balanced universe,
now teetering on the edge.

Barefoot in the Snow

My words walk across the clean,
white page like footprints on a fresh
coat of snow. A redbird sits on a gray
branch of a leafless oak like a drop
of blood. Barefoot truth is cold-cocked,

numbed by the beauty. The snowflakes
whisper, "shhh they're sleeping,"
as they fall over the buried
tulips and hyacinths. The heat
of my steps leaves dark holes

in the snow's uniform
cover; the muddy water underneath
seeps out and destroys
the once undisturbed cloak
of white purity. But there, in the thick
of the woods, the hungry
old buck still ruts his antlers
against a tree.

Blake Ellington Larson

Blake Ellington Larson invented the color pink. He does not collect Care Bears and most certainly doesn't have a subscription to The Believer.

On a scale of one to awesome, he would definitely be awesome. He lives in the quiet suburbs of Alameda, California and would very much like to meet you.

He's been published by *Amphibi.us*, *Back Room Live*, *Beatnik Cowboy*, *Black Heart Magazine*, *Bolts of Silk*, *Cherry Picked Hands* and *Picaresque*.

you said once that our sunflower days

would wilt mountains into mist

solid lines like melted ice and river beds

straight lines changing
the sun and sea both

i smothered your infinities along
silver string and red carpet

i closed the book
reread the chapter

i mapped your canary wisdom
over coal miner sadness
and caught empty buses to empty parks

i dined on empty plates
and talked empty philosophy
with godless mermaids

Tom Mahony

Tom Mahony is a biological consultant in California with an M.S. degree from Humboldt State University. His fiction has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in dozens of online and print publications. His first novel, *Imperfect Solitude*, was published by Casperian Books in 2010. Visit him at tommahony.net.

Time

We climb the ridge and reach the summit overlooking the Pacific. A south swell textures the ocean and in the mountains we see the silent destruction of sandstone cliffs weathering to boulder and cobble and eventually sediment transported in creeks to the ocean. We glance around and see fallen Douglas-fir in various states of decay and vernal pools drying in the late spring warmth and a decomposing robin chick on the ground with insects buzzing around it to briefly live and die among the rot.

The mountains force us to think about the warped scale of time. About the few days of life for the chick, the few months for insects and vernal pools, the few hundred years for Douglas-fir, the few tens or hundreds of millions for the uplift and erosion of mountains, and the billions required for the formation of oceans and living earth. We wonder what will happen after the sun burns out and engulfs the planet.

What's the point to any of it?

We haven't the slightest clue but as we hike back down the mountain and smell the spring foliage and see the distant blue Pacific and hear the call of a red-shouldered hawk we think we're an inch closer to the truth.

Vivian Faith Prescott

Vivian Faith Prescott's poetry appears in *Turtle Quarterly*, *Drunken Boat*, *Copperfield Review* and *Permafrost*.

Her first book of poetry, The Hide of My Tongue, will be published this winter by Plain View Press.

She lives in Sitka, Alaska and Puerto Rico at the U.S.C.G.

Borinquen Air Station where she facilitates adult and teen writers' groups.

She is also the Co-Director of a non-profit called Raven's Blanket based in Wrangell, Alaska, which is designed to perpetuate the cultural wellness and traditions of Indigenous peoples through education, media, and the arts.

Know My Skin

To know my skin, smell bull kelp
and popweed, catch my scent

after a morning walk on the beach.
Know my skin—pronounce my name,

your voice rising and falling; don't laugh
whenever I speak. Be able to lick

the bark of my skin, at s'áxt¹—it tastes
like soggy earth, the flavor of rainforest.

And listen—don't be offended
by scratchy sounds, settle in among

silences. Know my skin—look beyond
paleness, see reindeer herds,

glaciers calving, kitty-wakes sitting
on drifting logs, and snails. Learn

my outer shell, ax daakanóox'u²;
understand my membrane layered world;

touch peculiar stories, become familiar
with strangeness: my antenna eyestalks,

the spiral of my shell, and my slick
tongued foot.

1. In the Tlingit language: at s'áxt: Devil's club plant.
2. ax daakanóox'u: outer shell, or clan opposite.

The Place For Hunting Snowy Owls

I.

I imagine the little boy is learning the world was created in seven days. He learns history begins with a man named Columbus. He learns his heroes are Paul Revere, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. He asks the teacher why no aunties are mentioned in books—he's laughed at. At lunchtime, he eats their stale bread but he's sneaked some dry fish into his pocket. He wishes he had seal grease to dip it in. He learns Alaska was 'discovered' by someone with a name he cannot pronounce. He learns the Russians 'owned' Alaska and the Russians were fools for selling it. He itches at his clothing and fidgets in his too tight shoes. He turns to see Raven rapping at the window and he's momentarily distracted. He realizes this "school" must be something Raven has orchestrated. He smiles, sits down, and begins struggling with words on the page.

II.

In his dorm room he tries to make sense of a map borrowed from the library. He traces the shoreline and mountains with an owl feather; he keeps the feather hidden in his Bible. This is Raven's world, but he misses the sound of the owl's shriek and hiss, the clapping beak, the *hooo-uh, hooo-uh, hooo-uh, whu-whu-whu*. He thinks he can walk back home. He is from *Ukpiagvik*, the-Place-for-Hunting-Snowy-Owls. It's just over these mountains. He'll be cold in these clothes because the headmistress burned his hand made parka, the *qusruffaq*, the one his grandmother made him before coming to this school. He's packing his bag.

III.

Three other students walk into his dorm room. One is Tlingit, one is Tsimshian, the other is Haida. They ask what he's doing. He tells them he's going home. He's sick of it here. He's been here several years. He's a young man now. He can fend for himself back in his village. They laugh

and he laughs with them. They explain they're on an island and he can't go over the mountains.

IV.

His friends tell him they're going to a meeting held behind closed doors. No one is to know. At the meeting, they say how they are graduating soon. They talk about organizing to get rid of places like this. They want to sit in any seat in the movie theater. They want to go into any restaurant. They say it's time to unite all Natives. So they meet again and again and plan. They are the future of the Alaska Native Brotherhood—The ANB.

V.

He still has two more years here at the boarding school. He must wait like the snowy owl waits for its prey. He dreams of flying over the tundra, his wings beating the familiar rhythm of the up-stroke and down-stroke. Below him, the sedge meadows, lemmings, a whalebone arch.

About EarthSpeak

EarthSpeak is a newly-founded online literary journal that hopes to open up a small but honest space where writers of various persuasions can pursue a dialogue concerning one of the most crucial issues of our times, namely the fitful relationship between humanity and the natural world.

It also hopes to support an array of different conservation/restoration organizations through its Donation Program, which aims to funnel some of the magazine's modest proceeds into organizations which exhibit a strong sense of environmental stewardship and integrity.

EarthSpeak is interested in essays, stories and poems that explore a wide gamut of different issues and experiences as they pertain to nature and our own place within it. Submission deadlines follow a seasonal rhythm, further information for which can be found on the website's submissions page.

All submissions and inquiries may be sent to:

submissions@earthsspeakmagazine.com.