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VERSE IN PLACE

TERRY LUCAS

Recycling

I am wheeling the recycling bin
down the driveway, the steep
pot-holed driveway, eighteen percent
grade—impossible for trucks
to negotiate up through
freighted foliage to our house.
I am thinking about the plastic
Arrowhead water bottles, broken down
cardboard boxes, Ball Mason jars
with a faint grape odor
I am sending out into the world
after having consumed their contents—
I am wondering where they will go,
if I will see them again, and if I would
recognize them in an altered form
or universe.

I am wondering about the day
the wood pulp in the cardboard was conceived
from a single photon of sunlight striking
one green leaf of perhaps the great-
great-grandmother of this eucalyptus tree
or that balsam fir. And I am amazed at the thought
of breathing in molecules of air,
exhaled from plants, as well as from people
dead for years—Darwin, Shakespeare,
Whitman, Crane—swirling in my lungs,
their embered words, unreadable
heat signatures, along with the last breath
sucked from the chest of some rapist
on death row, a thief
hanging on a cross by nails
fashioned from iron smelted in a star
gone nova over five billion years ago—
the same metal hammering through my veins,
feverishly trying to get more
oxygen to my legs as I walk
back up the crumbling asphalt,
loose gravel anting oceanward—mother
ocean stretching up as tall as she can with every wave
for a glimpse of her prodigal children returning home.

From *Dharma Rain* (Saint Julian Press, 2016) and *Marin Poetry Center Anthology* (Volume XIX). Reprinted by permission of the author.

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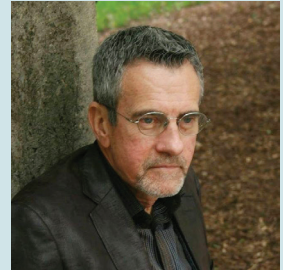
VERSE IN PLACE

TERRY LUCAS is the author of two prize-winning chapbooks, *If They Have Ears to Hear* (Southeast Missouri State University Press, 2012) and *Altar Call* (San Gabriel Valley Literary Festival, 2013), in addition to two full-length collections: *In This Room* (CW Books, 2016) and *Dharma Rain* (Saint Julian Press, 2017). A book of new and selected poems with photographs by Gary Topper, *The Thing Itself*, was published by Longship Press in 2020. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous national and international journals and anthologies, including *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Best New Poets*, *Beyond Words*, *B O D Y*, and *The Sun*, among others. Terry is Poet Laureate Emeritus of Marin County California and a freelance poetry coach and editor. He grew up in northern New Mexico and has lived in Texas, Chicago, Canada, and Northern California. In 2022 he returned to the New Mexican desert town of Las Cruces, where he leads online poetry workshops and curates Sturgeon Moon Poetry Readings.

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