

2025 JAMES WELCH PRIZE

WINNERS

selected by dg nanouk okpik

**Desirée Bewley
Dallagiacomo**

Blood Quantum Pastoral

Chris Hoshnic

*Pastoral Prayer as a Genre at
the Kayenta Shopping Center*

FINALISTS

*selected by poets from the board and advisory committee of In-Na-Po (Indigenous Nations Poets)
with the editors of Poetry Northwest*

Danielle Shandiin Emerson

Michaelsun Stonesweat Knapp • Ibe Liebenberg

Noelani Piters • Delaney R. Olmo

HONORABLE MENTION

Kinsale Drake • Bonney Hartley • Casandra López • Jamie Natonabah • Owen Oliver

Art by Aspen Decker



DESIREÉ BEWLEY DALLAGIACOMO

Blood Quantum Pastoral

My grandmother taught me when to pluck an apple
from the tree, twist like a doorknob. Taught me

to waste not want not. I know the land
loves me back because she told me so.

I'll say this: they did what they had to to survive
& so they did and did not survive. Yakoke

means thank you in our language & my grandmother
never knew that—her father did & did not survive.

I label my corn tanchi. I'm making my way back
somewhere. My hands in the dirt. My seeds in the earth.

Where she was born is an open plot of natural land
in eastern Oklahoma, sold off. There, she farmed

watermelon & corn & was forced to forget
our language. In my garden, I stake a hole

in the sheet mulch, cup three seeds in my palm. *One for the ancestors,*
one for the animals, & one for us. We count ourselves lucky

if even one makes it. She couldn't pass down
what she couldn't pass down, she handed

what she could. I keep my palms up.



CHRIS HOSHNIC

Pastoral Prayer as a Genre at the Kayenta Shopping Center

The
weight
ndadoodleel
kodi

on the reds, the grease, the grands kóó it wakes the peaking cable ties, knit ties
running inside the valleys and mesas. Turn a turbulent rush
the sequencing of KKKKK'ooossss KKKK'ooossss
Kóó

Germ
inate
listen
nestle
kodi.

A wild waste coarse in manila violet blue. A discropping. Men boiled to tin foil
roofs. Abusehood. Kóó, a dream work of patience, prayer-men.

W e with them
o d
n r

This vacant plaza stains. Stakes them against the corners of the store grounds. A
lonely shadow lives here, kóó,

a laundromat, an Ace hardware store, a theatre, a wild
waging Subway of sorts. They once called this a Coast.
Kodi, the wishing seas of grief and burialment and fervor
come waist deep in cork-blue. Not a hermit in sight of luce.
A tailored yoke of amber jynx. Kóó, the crepe of a wild
Indian washing up against the highways nízaadgóó, they
run through. Call it pit-stop, call Me pixelated camera
phone

photo.



In this photograph,

Your icy fingers roar across my ceramic tiles. I call those *diyogí*. They bite
into the same Whitman lines you savor. Cause an avalanche on your
Rockwell fantasy. Would you hang me in your bedroom above the baby's
crib and call it *diyogí*? Would you call it

Me?

Kodi, this is all I will remember in the afterlife.

Kodi, this is how they will remember Me in the afterlife.

Of course,

not
a bother
of warp
Waning
K'os
will guide
Me
back

kóó
where
it
they
Us
be
long

Kodi
near
a grand
hope
of a weight.

now let us pray the weight away along this Coast,

kodi.



DANIELLE SHANDIIN EMERSON

Love poem to Juniper of my youth

Chopped bast, on the other side of the neighborhood.
Round cheeks, dyed together stirring,
boil & stir shared desire, let it sit overnight.
Her raw kisses, between stone & mordant,
fiber lined lips. Ya' don't see girls
like her 'round northern New Mexico, maybe in abq.
or those ac'ed galleries along Santa Fe, with the old bilagááná retirees.
I forage for her stare in the wool of the Four Corners.
We take each other's hair & twist, & twist,
wringing out melted water, then
strain, boil, & strain again.
I grind the depth, shades of brown thread between my thighs—
We step into the bath to rinse sweat
from our bodies, bodies, bodies mingled,
bodies meshed, washed, & riddled, given that good 'ol navajo tough love.
Shoulders brew, sheen limbs cut fresh,
over timber & wet orange blossoms.
Together, we are dried,
rolled with purple tinted hands. Spindles run back & forth
on masani's Waterflow Trading Post lap
until our lungs, far reaching Tsé'Bitá'í voices, winged eyeliner,
smeared with the pad of my thumb, becoming
the tone of damp, hand-spun yarn.
Juniper becomes water loose promises
on chapped lips, & we bite—hard—
until someone bleeds.



IBE LIEBENBERG

chickasaw love poem

with the naked buckwheat swaying
and the common yarrow
spinning like stars
she said *what a dance*
when i said i couldn't
she pointed to the ground
crawl with me
if we are lucky
and quiet
the pallid bats
will wing down
rasp and click
before they bless us
coyote bush blooms in clouds
without rain or thunder
and nightjars and their night voices
praise our darkness like a home



NOELANI PITERS

In the Sense of Island

As if to say, on the island, there is a kind of sense
that exists only here.

As if to say, in this sense, there is only island.

As if to say, once, there existed another sense:
to taste, touch, see, smell, hear, and to island.

As if to say, on the island I call home, I make
my own sense, parse history from memory from ‘āina
and what it tells me—and what it tells me, I keep
in the chest.

As if to say, sense-making is also island-forming.

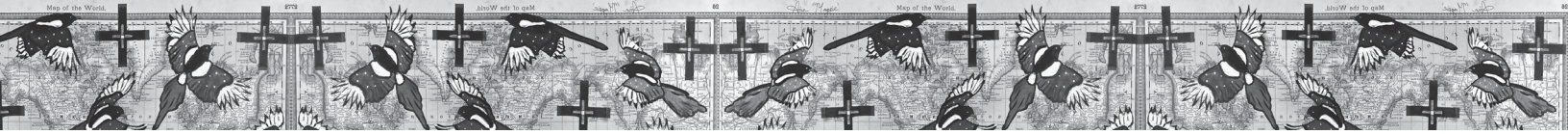
As if to say, those nights on O‘ahu when city light
obscured starlight and dovesong hummed with car horn
and salt air met salt pork and the blood of my grandmother
still ran hot, I was living a different life—one
I didn’t know about.

As if to say, abundance and loss were twins
separated at birth, reunited with differences pronounced.

As if to say, on the island I met the person I was always looking for.

As if to say, I didn’t know I didn’t want her after all.

As if to say, on the island of gau gee and spicy ahi poke,
dream cake and shave ice, pillowy bao and kau yuk,
haupia and kūlolo, crispy skin duck and spam musubi,
sugar-sparkling malasadas and common mango,
I am never hungry enough to feel full; not anymore.

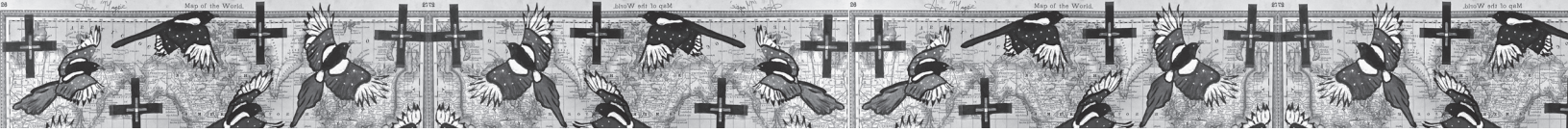


As if to say, my belly floats while the rest of me
rests without me.

As if to say, detached.

But say you learn to island: say monstera, anthurium, and torch ginger bed you, say the creek that
edges Maunawili where your grandfather shot wild boar to save his plants overflows, say you return
and find family with leathered skin you do not recognize living in a house with no electricity, say
you're scared, say you watch uncle with nine toes cradle kittens, say you palm the sleeping grass and
want to close too, say you open instead, say you brush sand from your eyes and mistake sleep for a
sister, say every person you meet reminds you of someone, say a stranger kisses your cheek like
they've known you forever, say you never learn to hula but still feel something when you hear the
chants, say you pretend longing will not rule you, say you emerge from ocean and magma like this
archipelago did, say you learn to live with the upward tugging in your gut, say the undertow claims
you.

As if there could be any other way to island
but to scar—teeth, skin, and all.



DELANEY R. OLMO

Quail Inheritance

For my Grandmother

Emerge from the ocean, the seastorm cradling the waves
sun without sky,

fish without scales, fisherman with nets, arriving in monsoon
gathering dried kelp and abalone meat—

foam against rocks, pepper wood trees, land stretching miles,
sagebrush everlasting,

redwood inheritance
that stepfather built with his own two hands after dreaming.

I was born away from home in Healdsburg between
an old hospital and Gravenstein apple orchard

Never forgetting my first memory, father on the train,
or mother's solemn face knowing he won't return.

Feelings swell beneath her cotton apron.

After her remarrying, I become a stranger in my body.

Dying to leave home, dreaming of valleys with wide
Hills under sequoia trees, seeing my future self.

In dreams, I am more in tune with life— coming and going.

Each winter passing, Strawberry Festival harvest
I am like a bird trapped in a nest, yearning for more.

Through open windows I flutter, the wind whispers the
Kashia name beneath canyons, the one birth father gave me.

Some ceremonies get rigorous, menstruation means
I cannot dance or sing anymore; I watch my sisters who are
still young not yet women—in fear of their unknown.

Medicine woman praying over us all, roots beneath grass, seeds
To bloom with Creator's breath in coming spring.

In secret, birds leave nests, never returning home until years
After mother dies, and even then, I am at a loss for words.