

MONDAY, JULY 10, 2023

## THINKING ABOUT THE NEWS, I PICK WILD RASPBERRIES

by Bonnie Naradzay



Israeli forces have [concluded their largest-scale](#) military operation in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin in decades, killing at least 12 Palestinians and leaving widespread destruction across the city's refugee camp. —[CNN](#), July 5, 2023. The Israeli military says all of the at least 12 Palestinians killed in its near 48-hour operation were combatants, and [that its](#) operation aimed to break the mindset that Jenin is a “safe haven” for militants. But the Palestinian fighters parading through the streets in broad daylight, with weapons strapped to their chests, showed that they remain unbroken and defiant. The Jenin Brigade, a faction affiliated with the wider Islamic Jihad group, said eight of the dead, ranging in age from 16- to 21-years-old, came from among their ranks. Meanwhile, United Nations experts [have stated](#) that five children were among the dead. Muhammad Darwish Photo: The back wall of Hanaa al-Shalaby's daughters' room was blown out, leaving chunks of rubble on a small bed. —[CNN](#), July 7, 2023

Walking along the road to the metro,  
I have read that of 12 killed so far,  
5 were children. The IDF claimed  
they were all terrorists. The clusters  
of raspberries are red and I eat them.  
Over 1,000 soldiers supported  
by missile-carrying drones  
invaded dense neighborhoods.  
IDF means Israel Defense Force;

it withdrew with its armored cars  
from the Jenin refugee camp only  
after depriving families of electricity,  
water; after smashing roads to rubble;  
after blocking ambulances trying to reach  
the wounded, after invading hospitals  
and detonating canisters of tear gas there.  
The raspberries are still safe to eat.  
The news says Israel is buying 25  
more F-35 stealth fighter jets from  
the U.S. for free; [the deal is financed](#)  
through U.S. military aid: nearly  
\$4 billion given outright to Israel  
every year no matter what;  
not as loans to be paid back.  
I turn back to the raspberries,  
remembering that time I ate ripe  
mulberries from a tree in the park.  
The UN observer on tv said Jenin,  
in the Occupied West Bank,  
is in Area A, which is supposedly  
under the sole control of Palestine.  
Meanwhile Israel launched airstrikes  
[attacking Gaza again](#). I pay my fare  
at the metro, go downtown  
to the homeless shelter, and share  
poems by Tu Fu and Langston Hughes.

SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 2023

## THE ROLE OF THE POET

by Bonnie Naradzay



Israeli soldiers will not face criminal prosecution for the death of an elderly Palestinian-American man who was stopped at a checkpoint, dragged from a car, bound and blindfolded and then left unresponsive on the ground overnight after apparently suffering a heart attack due to his rough treatment. —Aljazeera, June 14, 2023. Photo: Israeli soldiers in occupied West Bank village of Qafin on May 30, 2023

I am thinking of the role of the poet  
is it to read through the morning news  
and try on the horrors of people's lives  
like today reading again about  
the 78year old American stopped  
by IDF soldiers in the West Bank at night  
during a "routine incursion" in the village  
of Jiljilya since after the man was dragged  
from his car for 200 meters he was gagged  
his wrists bound was left face down for hours  
in a cold warehouse with others called  
"detainees" by the news report that said  
after hours like that he was found dead  
but his death could not be determined  
to be caused "specifically" by anything  
the soldiers had done after leaving him  
which was their routine since he was also  
Palestinian and so the case was closed  
or is the job of the poet to imagine being  
forced to cross the border into Belarus  
or Mexico at gunpoint or watch again  
the video of the Greek Coast Guard  
rounding up asylum seekers, including  
young children, then taking them to sea,  
abandoning them on a raft. Or is the poet  
called on to describe the patterns of leaves  
as someone suggested to me without irony.

THURSDAY, JUNE 08, 2023

## WHILE READING *THE GUARDIAN*, I RECOGNIZE A FAMILIAR NARRATIVE

by Bonnie Naradzay



A three-year-old Palestinian boy has died in hospital, four days after he was shot in the head by Israeli soldiers while riding in a car with his father in the occupied West Bank. Mohammed al-Tamimi (above) was airlifted to the Sheba hospital near Tel Aviv after the incident Thursday and remained in a critical condition until medical officials announced his death on Monday. His father, Haitham al-Tamimi, 40, is still being treated at a Palestinian hospital. His injuries are not believed to be life-threatening. —*The Guardian*, June 5, 2023

After blocking entrances to a village  
in the Occupied West Bank,  
Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) shot  
a father and his three year old boy  
because they lived there.

Bullets went through the boy's head;  
he was airlifted to a Jewish hospital  
near Tel Aviv. They shoot the boy  
then act as if they want to save him.  
A few days later he's dead.

His father's in a Palestinian hospital bed.  
What is life to him now?  
The story was, the IDF said,  
that the bullets were shot by Palestinians.  
This is how the narrative always starts.

Then the word "crossfire" is used.  
But eyewitnesses said there was no other gunfire.  
Then the IDF admits they shot the father and his son  
and "regrets harm to noncombatants. Doing everything

in its power to prevent..." The case is closed.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2022

## HOW NORMAL LIFE IS IN KHERSON!

by Bonnie Naradzay



Russian soldiers have shot dead a Ukrainian musician in his home after he refused to take part in a concert in occupied Kherson, according to the culture ministry in Kyiv. Conductor Yuriy Kerpatenko declined to take part in a concert "intended by the occupiers to demonstrate the so-called 'improvement of peaceful life' in Kherson", the ministry said in a statement on its Facebook page. The concert on 1 October was intended to feature the Gileya chamber orchestra, of which Kerpatenko was the principal conductor, but he "categorically refused to cooperate with the occupants", the statement said. —*The Guardian*, October 16, 2022

How normal life is in Kherson,  
ruled by Russian invaders since April!  
A life of repression, kidnapping,  
and mass detainment of its citizens.  
How normal life is in Kherson!  
with Russian invaders planning  
a concert for the first of October  
to show how normal life is in Kherson  
while deporting everyone to unknown  
locations from Kherson because  
this is how normal life is in Kherson.  
The conductor for the concert,  
that the Russian invaders insisted on,  
to show how normal and calm it was,  
Yurii Kerpatenko, declined to take part .  
So in true Soviet tradition the invaders  
went to his home and murdered him,  
to prove how normal life is in Kherson.

MONDAY, JUNE 13, 2022

## BARBARIANS AT THE GATE

by **Bonnie Naradzay**  
with a line from **Richard Wilbur**



Russia is likely to seize control of the entire Luhansk region of Ukraine within a few weeks, a senior U.S. defense official said, as Ukraine sustains heavy casualties and its supplies of ammunition dwindle. Such a move would leave Russia short of its war aims of capturing all of Luhansk and Donetsk, which together make up the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. But it would still amount to a win for Russian forces and create a new de facto front line that could last for some time. —*The Washington Post*, June 11, 2022. Photo: Black smoke and dirt rise from Severodonetsk during battle between Russian and Ukrainian troops in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region June 9. (Aris Messinis/AFP/Getty Images)

After reading how the internet takes  
us into a circle of doom because it keeps  
us in the recent past, after recursively wading  
into news again about the dark tides of war,  
the brutal devastation in Ukraine,  
the pleas that we not forget their pain,  
I thought of Xerxes' bridge of pontoons  
over the Hellespont after Darius, stopped  
by the battle at Marathon, failed to subjugate  
the Greeks. The pontoon bridge collapsed.  
Xerxes, after having his engineers beheaded,  
commanded the waters to be lashed  
three hundred times. Shackles were thrown  
into the sea for symbolic effect,  
which makes me think of Herodotus,

who changed the meaning of "barbarian"  
because of what Xerxes did.  
Here I stray again to the continuous loop  
of the near past, when Russian invaders  
built a "pontoon" bridge over a river  
not once but twice, with predictable results.  
During the Persian invasion at Thermopylae,  
that narrow pass, Xerxes asked the Greeks  
to surrender, and Leonidas dared him  
to come take their weapons.  
The valiant 300 fought to their deaths,  
hoping to buy time for reinforcements to arrive.  
I am thinking of the fighters who were trapped  
in Mariupol, woefully outnumbered;  
of those surrounded now in east Ukraine,  
buying time for the delivery of weapons  
and missile systems they must beg for  
in that endless caravan of death.  
How quickly we recoil from the page,  
*leaving us dumbstruck and with an ache.*

MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2022

## ANTIGONE IN MARIUPOL

by Bonnie Naradzay



Mariupol, Ukraine 17 April 2022. REUTERS/Alexander Ermochenko

I searched the ruined city for my brother  
to consecrate him with a proper burial.

Snow was still falling in the cold spring then.  
I stopped at a body pockmarked with bullets;  
the fingers on each hand had been bent backwards.  
I came upon a corpse without a head.  
Do I know him? Oh, they are all my brothers,  
in mass graves everywhere, shoved into ditches,  
dead in the midst of life from this unholy invasion.  
Now I myself am buried—in tunnels below the city,  
refusing to surrender to the enemy king who said  
not even a fly will be allowed to leave alive.  
Sentries are everywhere, barricading the doors.  
Where oh where is the civilized world?  
Some day, perhaps, Sophocles will create a tragedy  
for people to witness—and make sense of this.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022

## **ABEL ASKS HIS BROTHER WHAT CAME OVER HIM**

**by Bonnie Naradzay**





CAIN ET ABEL (CAIN AND ABEL), 1960, an original color lithograph by Marc Chagall designed for and published by VERVE for the volume *Dessins pour La Bible*.

after Agnieszka Tworek

If I gave the best when I offered my sheep  
while your harvest fell short of the mark,  
why turn against me? There was still time—

Now my blood cries out from the ground  
you have claimed as your own. You know  
the land mine you rigged to me will explode.

Alas, the loaf of bread I'd held, this pool of blood.  
How could you choose to bludgeon my cows,  
to wreak your vengeance against them too?

We are brothers; yet you attacked my humanity,

dragged me with your arms. Let me feel the snow  
fall across my face as I say goodbye to life.

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2022

## ANAPHORA: UKRAINE ENLIGHTENMENT

by Bonnie Naradzay

Asked about Ukraine, Trump talked about windmills  
due to concern about his Scottish golf resort.  
Asked about Ukraine, Don Jr. crowed that his dad  
played Putin like a fiddle.  
Asked about Ukraine, Alex Ovechkin said I am  
not in politics. I'm an athlete.  
Asked about support for Ukraine, the House easily passed  
another \$1 billion to add to Palestinian suffering.  
Asked about bombing Ukraine's hospitals in Mariupol,  
Russia's foreign ministry said it's fake information terrorism.  
Asked about Ukraine, fans said they don't want to miss  
baseball season.  
Asked about Ukraine, Paul Gosar said, I remain firmly convinced  
that our southern border security should take precedence.  
Asked about Ukraine, Tucker Carlson of Fox News claimed Russian  
buildup of troops on its border was about a simple border dispute.  
Asked about Ukraine, Congressman Good said we should secure our border.  
Asked about Ukraine, Congressman Norman said it's too late  
to help now that Russia has invaded.  
Asked about Ukraine, Madison Cawthorne called its president a thug  
and said its government is evil.  
Asked about Ukraine, Ted Cruz, wearing Ray-Ban sunglasses, said truckers  
want the government to leave them the hell alone and to keep their gas prices low.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021

## BIGGER THAN THE GAME

by Bonnie Naradzay

**Galileo: "Eppur si muove," and yet it moves.**

An NBA player who shall be unnamed  
refuses to have the coronavirus shot  
and says this is bigger than the game;  
this was after he'd said the world was flat  
but some years later blithely explained  
he was big into conspiracy theories then  
and said we've all been there, right?  
Meanwhile an island that's part of Taiwan,

just six miles from mainland China,  
has been surrounded by Chinese boats  
fishing for squid; the boats flood the sky  
with lurid green lights to stun the squid,  
deplete all fish, send the islanders into despair.  
It's complicated, it's covert aggression,  
nothing can be done, it will only get worse,  
like the illegal settlers (during the olive harvest  
with the few trees left) on the West Bank  
who beat the limping Palestinian teen,  
hung him from a tree, burned his feet,  
released him to the Israeli police.  
My friend says he doesn't read the news  
to protect himself from being sad  
but I think why am I alive, otherwise,  
if not to know what's wrong and right,  
for I believe in Paradise,  
in the separation of church and state,  
in the perfidy of pulpits and gerrymandering.  
It's bigger than the game.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 07, 2021

## DEUS EX MACHINA, AFGHANISTAN

by **Bonnie Naradzay**



Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller speaks during an official handover ceremony in Kabul. Hours later, Miller departed in a Black Hawk helicopter. —*The Washington Post*, July 12, 2021. Credit: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images via *The*

*Washington Post.*

The Vietnamese mechanic in the VW repair place  
fixed my car radio today and as I drove off,  
I heard the BBC's news about Afghanistan:  
American bombs dropped from the air, in a war  
now directed from Tampa, Florida, are killing  
the doomed citizens caught in the crossfire  
between the Taliban and the Afghan troops,  
abandoned in what's called a "civil war,"  
but it's not. Translators are beheaded now;  
you can read about how we betrayed them.  
The war cost over two trillion dollars, not  
counting the dead, the maimed, ruined lives.  
("History will not forget it," Haji Sakhi said,  
as he fled with his daughters to save them from  
the Taliban again.) We turned off the electricity  
in Bagram and left in the dead of night. Who recalls  
the taxi driver, whom our countrymen tortured  
in Bagram, the old abandoned Soviet base, nearly  
twenty years ago? Mr. Dilawar was dead,  
they said, before they cut him down. "Our job,"  
explained the last American commander there,  
"is just not to forget." His Black Hawk helicopter  
lifted him up in a cloud of dust: our deus ex machina.

**Bonnie Naradzay** leads poetry salons at a day shelter for homeless people and also at a retirement community, both in Washington DC. Poems are in *AGNI*, *New Letters* (Pushcart nomination), *RHINO*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Tampa Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Florida Review Online*, *EPOCH*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Xavier Review*, *Pinch* (Pushcart nomination), *The New Verse News*, and countless others.

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021

## **BLOSSOMS**

by **Bonnie Naradzay**



In Gaza City, Riad Ishkontana mourned the death of one of his children on Sunday. Mr. Ishkontana said that when rescuers pulled him and his 7-year-old daughter from the rubble of his home after an airstrike, he awoke to a new life—one without his wife and four other children. Credit: Hosam Salem for *The New York Times*, May 19, 2021

I am feeling numb, reading about stun guns  
rubber tipped bullets and tear gas cannisters  
that I pay for with my taxes, and the Boeing  
weapons sales, mainly kits transforming bombs  
into precision missiles dropped from planes  
on Gaza, as before. Armed forces wreck Minarets  
during Ramadan. The call to prayer, up in flames.  
Worshippers at the mosque are felled with bullets.  
Evictions are enforced by the Courts, the way  
it's always done. Snipers target fleeing children;  
they've done it all before. When will we learn?  
Here, orange blossoms are exploding in the sun.  
I am feeling numb, reading about stun guns.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2021

**SOME DAY, PERHAPS...  
IT WILL HELP TO REMEMBER THESE  
TROUBLES AS WELL.\***

by **Bonnie Naradzay**



\*Aeneas to his men, after theirs is the only ship to survive a violent storm at sea near Carthage.

Friends, a study of The Black Death states the plague may have come from outer space. The Mars Rover landed in a dried up lake. Perseverance is transporting images home from the red planet. On earth, we learn that magnetic north and south may be flipping sides, an ominous event, according to weakening attractions and ancient iron shards stuck pointing the wrong way. In Galveston, medical workers asked for a refrigerated truck to store the dead bodies. Thousands of turtles stunned by the cold have gone to a convention center in the backs of station wagons. Ted Cruz got on the plane in jeans but went the wrong way, or the optics were wrong. Sweet Thames, and Virgil, flow gently while I end my song.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 02, 2021

## **THE YEAR IN REVIEW**

by **Bonnie Naradzay**



**after Ilya Kaminsk**

we lived happily, forgive us,  
we survived, even thrived,  
the way we slunk into the mud  
beside the walkways, gave in,  
turned our eyes away, gestured  
with gratitude, wore masks,  
our eyeglasses clouding over,  
vision blurred, happily seeing  
hypocrites roll up their sleeves,  
watch them all jump the lines,  
pull rank, Pence with his naked  
flabby arm, bravely showing  
how it's done, we stood aside,  
read about the one pardoned  
for ordering her police dog  
to savage a homeless man  
backed against the wall,  
showing how it's done,  
war criminals pardoned,  
mercenaries, paid with  
our taxes, gunning down  
children with impunity,  
the nakedness of our nation,  
we bowed in obeisance,  
sidled by, raised our hands,  
excused ourselves, waved  
a note from the teacher,  
we lived happily (forgive us)  
the long year, is it over yet?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2020

## TALKING ABOUT TREES

by Bonnie Naradzay



The Great Conjunction of 2020 will brighten the darkest day of the year as the two giant planets of our solar system draw closer together in the night sky than they have been in centuries. By chance, the day that Jupiter and Saturn will appear closest for Earth-based stargazers is Dec. 21, the winter solstice, which is the longest night of the year in the northern hemisphere. Photo: The galactic core area of the Milky Way over Maskinonge Pond in Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta on July 14, 2020. Jupiter is the bright object at left, with Saturn dimmer to the left (east) of Jupiter. Alan Dyer / Universal Images Group via Getty Images file via NBC, December 9, 2020.

**What kind of times are they, when  
A talk about trees is almost a crime  
Because it implies silence about so many horrors?  
—Bertolt Brecht, “To those Born Later”**

Thin ice limned the pond early this morning  
and a slick of frost dazzled the green fields  
yet pink blossoms still drifted across a few limbs  
of the lone ornamental cherry tree.  
In the slant of sun, the great blue heron stood  
knee deep in water, and ducks have returned  
among reflected shapes of pondside trees –



bare branches outstretched like hands of penitents.  
I have been arguing all evening with my friend  
via email about Odysseus. He says Odysseus  
could have built that raft any time he wanted  
to escape from Calypso's island, but I say not until  
Athena persuaded Zeus to send Hermes down.  
I see Odysseus down by the seashore, weeping there,  
as the great hexameters roll out in the receding waves.  
Then we spar about the Suitors. They must be killed,  
he says, for their conspiracy. I ask, what about diplomacy?  
(It is Advent. The people are armed for insurrections here,  
spouting obscenities. "Sir, have you no sense of decency,"  
someone finally asked McCarthy, not so long ago.)  
My friend mentions Thersites. He has me there.  
Jesus healed the blind man and asked him what he saw.  
He said, "I see men like trees walking."  
Tonight I see two planets grow closer in the night sky.  
(I have grown numb about the latest attacks  
on civility.) Priam came for Hector's body  
in the dead of night. Achilles welcomed him  
and stopped the war for Hector's funeral rites.  
Recently I read about the Christmas truce in World War I  
for the burial of the dead. Someone brought lights.  
*Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times.*

SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2020

## HOW TO

by **Bonnie Naradzay**



"Zeus the Blind Owl" The original watercolor painting is by Artist Sinclair Stratton.

This morning we loaded cardboard boxes of vegetables into the trunks of cars. In each box, we put a card: "How to: Broccoli," in tiny print, one side in Spanish. *How to choose fresh broccoli.* But it had been chosen.

Families stayed in cars for hours in July's fierce heat. In church we have prayed for the virus to go away. You can buy human remains pouches on Amazon. The zipper locks are guaranteed to keep the liquid in.

A man in the car line going up the hill stood outside,  
bent over his battered Dodge Caravan, hood up, trunk held  
in place with Bungee cords. Steam rose from the radiator.  
The Great Pretender said he'd save the statue of Christ in Rio.

Last week, no form, no advice on Broccoli. Today,  
to receive the USDA box, they must fill out a form:  
name, address, the number in each family group.  
The rule: one box per family, no matter how many.

How to eat it raw with a dip, how to stir fry, steam.  
But we have seven in our family, one man pleaded.  
Our group gave him two. A small boy waved at us  
from the back seat. I saw the careful handwriting,

apartments disclosed, streets, so painstakingly done,  
all for a box of surplus white mushrooms, broccoli,  
head of iceberg lettuce.... Some boxes sagged.  
There's a Gaelic name for victims of bubonic plague

entombed in an Irish burial mound. A plague hill.  
Who sees the forms? One woman said, "We are illegal.  
We don't want to put our names down on anything."  
The young man in the passenger seat looked ahead.

In church we now regard the virus as a wake-up call.  
I nodded, put two boxes in the trunk of her small blue car  
that sputtered, set to break down. Mute me on Zoom.  
The Pharisees held out for handwashing, we were told.

The virus wants our lungs. Hart Island is our Potters Field.  
Camus said we are owls blinded by too much light.  
She told us the truth, and the truth will set us free.  
Then my eyes stung; I could hardly see.

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2020

## **LINES**

by **Bonnie Naradzay**



Sculpture depicting a Great Depression breadline at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington, D.C.

**This has been done before, standing in line for a long time.  
Think of Soviet women who queued for hours for bread.  
And I have learned about the lines of the Great Depression:  
men lined up for mind-numbing jobs at assembly lines.**

**Think of Soviet women who stood for hours for bread  
or Akhmatova outside the prison waiting for news of her son.  
Here, men lined up for mind-numbing jobs at assembly lines.  
These days some have it easy – food deliveries, yoga online.**

Akhmatova outside the prison waited with women for news and the chance to send a loaf of bread, or a note, inside. These days some have it easy – food deliveries, yoga online. Still, Camus said the plague is within us, here to stay.

I have learned about the lines of the Great Depression where hope envisions a loaf of bread, a note from inside. Camus wrote that the plague is within us, here to stay, as it has always done: waiting in line for a long time.

FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2018

## SHURBAJI'S SHIRT: CARRYING NAMES FROM A SYRIAN PRISON

by Bonnie Naradzay



Mansour Omari smuggled the strips of cloth bearing his fellow-detainees' names by sewing them into the collar and cuffs of a shirt. Photograph by Miriam Lomaskin / US Holocaust Memorial Museum via *The New Yorker*.

**Omari “said to them, ‘What do you think if we write the names of all the people, since we can’t memorize all of them?’” he told me. “Of course, they said yes.” —“Written in Blood and Rust from a Syrian Prison: ‘Don’t Forget Us’ by Robin Wright, *The New Yorker*, December 19, 2017**

When they called my name, I grabbed Shurbaji’s shirt.  
It was blue and white striped. He was saving it  
for his wedding as soon as he could get out  
but he gave us his shirt to smuggle our names.  
The tailor honed a chicken bone for a quill.  
Shurbaji, the other journalist, was skilled  
at handwriting, so he etched the names on strips  
of cloth. We made ink from rust scratched off cell bars,  
mixed with blood that Omar slowly collected.  
Making the quill a needle now, the tailor  
pulled the threads in Shurbaji’s shirt to embed  
the strips of names inside the cuffs and collar,  
replaced the threads. Omar the tailor is dead.

The first one called out takes the shirt. When I heard my name I grabbed his blue and white wedding shirt. They transferred me to another underground prison and still another. I saved the shirt. Sweat blurred some names by the time I was released. *My love, we are coming back.* Don't forget us. Our group of five shared a space of three floor tiles. Still unfolding in the news, the dead, the names of all eighty-five of us, sharing space in there. She learned that Shurbaji died after three years in prison and terrible beatings. *My love, My love, we are coming back.* Shurbaji sang. He'd kept the shirt in prison for the wedding. Don't forget us. *My love, see the names. His shirt.*



An all-too-truthful mash-up of two photos from Eastern Ghouta, Syria.

## **TINY CHAIRS IN BETHLEHEM, AUGUST 2017**

**by Bonnie Naradzay**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr7dYlscIDw&t=11s>

On the outskirts of Bethlehem  
Israeli military jeeps  
late at night arrive at a school,  
newly built, as locals prepare  
for next morning's grand opening.  
Shooting tear gas, and rubberized  
steel bullets used for crowd control,  
soldiers clear villagers from there.  
Then bulldozers and flatbed trucks  
show up and take the school away,  
including tables and teaching  
aids, leaving only tiny chairs.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2010

## **TERZANELLE: CHOLERA COLLIDES WITH VOTERS IN HAITI**

**by Bonnie Naradzay**

This is a story of heaped-up corpses, bagged in sacks.  
Masked workers spray everything with a bleach solution.  
Bodies, marked with cardboard tags, are piled up in stacks.

A bulldozer covers them, making a mounded earth cushion.  
In Port au Prince, candidates woo voters with music and floats.  
Masked workers spray everything with a bleach solution.

The streets throng with supporters singing jingles for votes  
Political rallies end with gunfire, voodoo and fights.  
In Port au Prince, candidates woo voters with music and floats.

Cholera patrols the streets at night under sporadic electric lights.  
Death accompanies earthquakes, cholera, and torrential rain.  
Political rallies end with gunfire, voodoo and fights.

UN troops patrol in trucks, their half-hearted greetings in vain.  
Half-naked men from the slums wade into sewage to clean it.  
Death accompanies earthquakes, cholera, and torrential rain.

Candidates dance, shout jingles, collide near mounded graves.  
This is a story of heaped-up corpses, bagged in sacks.  
Half-naked men from the slums wade into sewage to clean it.  
Bodies, marked with cardboard tags, are piled up in stacks.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2010

# HANOVER COUNTY JAIL, COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

by **Bonnie Naradzay**

Lunch today for the inmates means white bread  
and a slice of baloney. Dinner is more of the same.  
The limit now – two meals a day to stay in budget.  
The jail's run by a profit-making corporation.  
Vending machines hold other selections,  
like undated Twinkies and cinnamon buns.  
Immigration rents beds here  
for young, married Chinese women  
without papers, only fake passports they bought in haste.  
Fearing reprisals, they fled the provinces, their homes and families.  
For one bore a child after marrying too young, at twenty,  
and another had a second child, a girl.  
One has an abscessed tooth.  
As a volunteer, I write down her plight,  
mainly that she cannot pay a Chinese-speaking lawyer  
in New York City, her only hope, or even call long distance,  
collect. I read her confession, search for gestures.  
The budget does not fund dental work, I'm told.  
What's more, they charge for aspirin.  
The next one, wearing the same ink-blue pajamas  
and plastic shower shoes,  
holds her stomach, speaks of constant pain.  
The doctor comes once a month  
and sees only those who signed up long before.  
The system weeds out malingerers, the female warden says,  
handing me a sheaf of small-print regulations.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 03, 2010

## OCTOBER OLIVE HARVEST

by **Bonnie Naradzay**

The time for harvesting olives heightens the ancient moan of violence.  
Palestine, your olive oil has survived the deadly zone of violence.

The sound of Arabic floats above silvery trees in ancient olive groves.  
Whole families, visible in the fields: targets for stone hurling violence.

Our trees, bulldozed. We'll plant more, and water them with our tears.  
Arson has carried away our harvest with its fiery wind-blown violence.


O Hebron, the IDF militants are complacent and look the other way.  
Trespassing, masked settlers swing chains: bone breaking violence.

What use, coming to the table, weakly mouthing conciliatory terms?  
I tell you, Nablus reels from rubber bullets, the harsh tone of violence.



The police station's located in an illegal settlement. Why complain?  
Eye-witness alone are left to smuggle the word of this unknown violence.

Where are the village festivals and celebrations at olive harvest time?  
Instead of sowing seeds, our children grow to anger, honed from violence.

Posted by Editor at 4:00 AM   
MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2008

## A VISIT TO GUANTANAMO

by **Bonnie Naradzay**

This is the island of wire pens.

The pens were built for men who fled  
their Haitian shacks in leaking crafts  
and rowed to the north in the endless sea.

But Coast Guard cruisers barred the way  
and fished them out most cunningly,  
and sent them to stew on the island of wire pens.

They broiled in the sun on the island in wire pens.  
Then soldiers had them lie down flat  
And shipped them back to Port au Prince.

These are Islamic renditioned men,  
delivered all trussed up on planks,  
that reside on this island of wire pens.

The Red Cross saw the ugly stalls  
with concrete floors and manacles.  
"These men need roofs for their wire pens."

This is the home of styrofoam cups  
where men contrive to write in codes  
and live and die on the island of wire pens.

This is Jumah, robbed when he fled Afghanistan,  
imprisoned, sold to soldiers bankrolled to buy  
enemy combatants posing as friends.

This is the uniformed conscript  
billeted in air-cooled Quonset huts  
who gamely points out the basketball court

built for those who've signed  
confessions and wear black hoods,  
sequestered far from alien homes,

and die in codes on the island of wire pens.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2007

## POEM ON BLUE AFTER READING RILKE AND THE DAILY NEWS

by **Bonnie Naradzay**

Blue letter paper, the shadowy blue  
of Egyptian hieroglyphs, a folding

of hands. October morning in Paris –  
complete, supportless blue.

In Van Gogh, the self-contained  
blue. Listening and thunderstorm

blue in Cezanne, bourgeois cotton,  
opaque bluish white, greenish blue.

Cobalt patterns, certain tones,  
light cloudy bluishness, heavy

dark-blue stripe, this rolling of red  
into blue, hydrangea petals, waxy

blue of Pompeian wall paintings,  
densely quilted blue, heavenly

morning glory, Nabokov's butterfly,  
ice-blue gloves of the riot-armed

INS, worn to frisk immigrants caught  
working at Swift meat-packing plants.

Prison-issued denim of the inmates  
replacing them, paid 60 cents a day.

Crying the blues. Slope of curved hills  
full of revolt, Blue, Blue, Blue.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2007

## ENHANCED INTERROGATION TECHNIQUE

by **Bonnie Naradzay**

When you want to talk, just move your fingers.  
They tied me to a plank,  
fixed a tube to the tap at the sink,  
jammed a block in my mouth  
to force it open,  
wrapped my head in a rag.

The rag was soaked rapidly,  
water flowing into my mouth and nose.  
I had the impression of drowning  
and the terrible agony of death itself  
took possession of me.

In spite of myself, my fingers shook uncontrollably.  
In the gloom, I saw the captain with a cigarette  
between his lips hitting my stomach with his fist  
to make me throw up the water I had swallowed.  
I hardly felt the blows.

“Well, then?” But I remained silent.  
They put my head under again.  
This time I clenched my fists,  
forcing the nails into my palms.  
I did not move my hands.

Three times I feared that terrible  
moment when I felt myself losing  
control - while fighting  
with all my might not to die.  
The last time, I lost consciousness.  
When you want to talk, just move your fingers.

From Henri Alleg's memoir of the Algerian war. Alleg was a French journalist who supported Algerian independence. This instance of his "waterboarding" at the hands of French authorities, used also by the Khmer Rouge, Gestapo, Soviet Gulags and most recently by the American CIA, which terms this form of torture "Enhanced Interrogation Technique," was included in a complaint filed against Rumsfeld.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2006

## A MODEST FAMINE PROPOSAL

by **Bonnie Naradzay**

First came four imported breeds  
of potato, like the Four Horsemen,  
from the New World. The largest  
tuber, the Horse Potato, soon  
was all the Irish grew. Then,  
within days, the withering blight -  
and the sickening smell of decay.  
The British levied tariffs on imported corn,  
formerly used for animal fodder,  
and cheaper wheat was diverted  
from Ireland's poor to sell to the Continent.  
Sir Robert Peel's idea, maize from America,  
called "Peel's Brimstone" for the yellow color,  
did not catch on. The Chickasaw tribe donated  
money and wheat. Then England sponsored  
lectures, solely in English, on growing wheat  
- to starving tenants farming quarter-acre lots  
who spoke only Gaelic. Pamphlets  
were handed out on agricultural practices  
containing whole passages from Adam Smith.

Lady Gregory's husband's clause  
in the convoluted Poor Law  
forced tenants out of their huts,  
newly roofed with boughs and sod,  
away from their smoldering fires of peat,  
while priests gave last rites in the wind.  
In the winter of cholera,  
crow-bar brigades pulled apart  
the windowless huts of mud and stones,  
turned stick-thin families loose  
to starve in a ruined country.  
Where do rooks go when the trees are felled?  
Workhouses, devolved from charities,  
were locked down by English landlords  
claiming to have no food anywhere.  
Whole families, moaning to be let in,  
the next morning lay dead outside  
the bolted door where they'd lain all night,  
too weak to move on. After a week  
of building roads to nowhere, famished men  
on work crews died before their first pay came.  
The Duke of Norfolk then proposed – *Why not  
curry powder instead of the potato? They could live  
on curry powder mixed with water.*