



DRIFTWOOD PRESS



PRESENTS



ERASURE SEMINAR



SHOWCASE



POEMS & INTERVIEWS



FROM OUR 2020 CLASS





The following booklet is a class compilation. In mid-2020, *Driftwood Press* ran its second Erasure Seminar, in which students listened to lectures, joined in group reading and discussion, and had their work critiqued by instructor Jerrod Schwarz. At the end of this course, students were offered to submit the best erasures they made in the course; each student's best work is here presented alongside process interviews.

Fonts: Existence, Sitka, & Merriweather.
Managing Poetry Editor & Cover Design: Jerrod Schwarz
Magazine Design & Copyeditor: James McNulty
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The New York Times

03 June 2020

Tom Cotton: Send In the Troops

This week, rioters have plunged many American cities into anarchy, recalling the widespread violence of the 1960s.

New York City suffered the worst of the riots Monday night, as Mayor Bill de Blasio stood by while Midtown Manhattan descended into lawlessness. Bands of looters roved the streets, smashing and emptying hundreds of businesses. Some even drove exotic cars; the riots were carnivals for the thrill-seeking rich as well as other criminal elements.

Outnumbered police officers, encumbered by feckless politicians, bore the brunt of the violence. In New York State, rioters ran over officers with cars on at least three occasions. In Las Vegas, an officer is in "grave" condition after being shot in the head by a rioter. In St. Louis, four police officers were shot as they attempted to disperse a mob throwing bricks and dumping gasoline. In a separate incident, a 77-year-old retired police captain was shot to death as he tried to stop rioters from ransacking a pawnshop. This is "somebody's granddaddy," a bystander screamed at the scene.

Some cities have experienced this orgy of violence in the spirit of racial hatred, calling it an understandable response to the wrongful death of George Floyd. Those excuses are built on a revolting moral equivalence of rioters and looters to peaceful, law-abiding protesters. A majority who seek to protest peacefully shouldn't be confused with bands of miscreants.

But the rioting has nothing to do with George Floyd, whose bereaved relatives have condemned violence. On the contrary, nihilist criminals are simply out for loot and the thrill of destruction, with cadres of left-wing radicals like antifa

infiltrating protest marches to exploit Floyd's death for their own anarchic purposes.

These rioters, if not subdued, not only will destroy the livelihoods of law-abiding citizens but will also take more innocent lives. Many poor communities that still bear scars from past upheavals will be set back still further.

One thing above all else will restore order to our streets: an overwhelming show of force to disperse, detain and ultimately deter lawbreakers. But local law enforcement in some cities desperately needs backup, while delusional politicians in other cities refuse to do what's necessary to uphold the rule of law.

The pace of looting and disorder may fluctuate from night to night, but it's past time to support local law enforcement with federal authority. Some governors have mobilized the National Guard, yet others refuse, and in some cases the police and Guard combined. In these circumstances, the Insurrection Act authorizes the president to employ the military "or any other means" in "cases of insurrection or obstruction to the laws."

This venerable law, nearly as old as our republic itself, doesn't amount to martial law or the end of democracy, as some excitable critics, ignorant of both the law and our history, have comically suggested. In fact, the federal government has a constitutional duty to the states to protect each of them from domestic violence. Throughout our history, presidents have exercised this authority on dozens of occasions to protect law-abiding citizens from disorder. Nor does it violate the Posse Comitatus Act, which constrains the military's role in law enforcement but expressly excepts statutes such as the Insurrection Act.

For instance, during the 1950s and 1960s, Presidents Dwight

Eisenhower, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson called out the military to disperse mobs that prevented school desegregation or threatened innocent lives and property. This happened in my own state. Gov. Orval Faubus, a racist Democrat, mobilized our National Guard in 1957 to obstruct desegregation at Little Rock Central High School. President Eisenhower federalized the Guard and called in the 101st Airborne in response. The failure to do so, he said, "would be tantamount to acquiescence in anarchy."

More recently, President George H.W. Bush ordered the Army's Seventh Infantry and 1,500 Marines to protect Los Angeles during race riots in 1992. He acknowledged his disgust at Rodney King's treatment — "what I saw made me sick" — but he knew deadly rioting would only multiply the victims, of all races and from all walks of life.

Not surprisingly, public opinion is on the side of law enforcement and law and order, not insurrectionists. According to a recent poll, 58 percent of registered voters, including nearly half of Democrats and 37 percent of African-Americans, would support cities calling in the military to address protests and demonstrations that are in response to the death of George Floyd. That opinion may not appear often in chic salons, but widespread support for it is fact nonetheless.

The American people aren't blind to injustices in our society, but they know that the most basic responsibility of government is to maintain public order and safety. In normal times, local law enforcement can uphold public order. But in rare moments, like ours today, more is needed, even if many politicians prefer to wring their hands while the country burns.

Tom Cotton (@sentomcotton) is a Republican senator from Arkansas.

CAROLE CRAIG

Tom Cotton: Send
In the Troops

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

Black Lives Matter.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

As a journalist (my career until I became hearing impaired), my engagement with unfolding events was a constant. I loved that. As a short story writer, I struggle to find ways to speak to what goes on around me without speaking in polemics or twitter rants. Senator Tom Cotton's call for the state to use more force against the thousands and thousands of people in the streets protesting the state's use of force against people of colour chose itself.

There was a significant furore over *The New York Times'* strange decision to commission and run Cotton's column. Embarrassed, they took down the paywall and the column was easy to find. I laid it out in a three column format as it might appear in the newspaper and used Times New Roman type face.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

The easiest part was finding the vocabulary that was relevant to Black Lives Matter. The hardest part was to turn that vocabulary into a poem and not just a scattering of words.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

I am afraid it wasn't a single line or phrase but the sequence which was, for me, the heart of what I wanted to do:

subdued
lives
that still bear scars from past
an overwhelming
force

refuse
and
refuse
these circumstances
I like it for the fact it has some consonance.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

I am not a poet. I am a short story writer currently trapped in a genre novel. What attracts me to erasure poetry is the intimacy of its enagement with its source text. That is why I like, when possible, to leave my source text fairly visible on the page.

Even when erasure is done as blackout or whiteout, there is an immediacy and a tension in the new work being held or trapped by the old. I find that thrilling.

I especially like the way erasure can be used as dialogue with the intentions of the source text such as Jerrod Swartz's poem on Trump's inauguration speech, which attracted me to this seminar. One of other students in the seminar did a lovely piece on George Washington's first inauguration address. I like Margaret Yacom's work on *The Brother's Grimm*, Janet Holmes on War and Emily Dickinson. All of these works seem to me to be responses to the same impulses which generated their sources.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Take your time. Less is more.

Observations from a Train
Portland to Seattle

Write on the Rails to Seattle

Stopped on the tracks
Box car on the rails
Flashing lights
Rocks slowly
With quick small increments
Rumbles with rhythm
Becomes a sway

Piles of railroad ties
Tied the train tracks together
Trees tarred and dragged
Spiked into linear oblivion
A flock of swans
White Birds flock a curve
In the slough
Sleeping
Long necks tucked under a wing
Don't make waves
Float still on their water
Feathers float with wings

Bee hives
White—all face east
The bees know why

The train on a curve
The engine ahead
Oblivious to its deed
Hell bent direction

Bodies of water beckon offshore
Smokeless smoke stacks
Where is the gravel, the sand humility
Pipes, cords, empty parking lots
Old rotten tar
Piles of dirt
Metal pipes
Without steam

Without smoke
Nor any fire
Abandoned where trees had grown
By the tracks
Box cars sit alone
Tarp-covered wood chip piles
A large plume
Lovely as a vertical cloud
The train wailed
—unfamiliar
On command at road crossings
Now it hisses, undeniable
Not latent in its attitude

A still life
Against a pale near-blue sky
Ponies stand under an apple tree
Their heads to the ground

Long chicken houses host eggs
Chickens in little cages
Eggs drop and roll
Down a chute
Cylindrical fans
Choke on chicken feathers

World's largest egg
On the top of a post
November first and trees nearly bare
Creak around a curve
Straighten with a jerk

Engulfed in a forest
The Pacific Northwest
As it was

Plaza Jalisco
“Gale” on a truck
Waiting at a cross guard
They wait for my train to pass
Stands and stands of trees
Left alone by you
A standing ovation

House on a hill

Columnaded porches
Empty of cars
Corrugated one-story restaurant
Closed

“Whalen Quilt Works”
No lights
Windows shuttered
Wood chip piles
Tents and tarps
Tractors stand
Steam rises
Spiral-like
Doubled off mirror pond
Land locked, except for effluent
Trucks along side road “Rent Me”
I just might

My coach car rings of people’s phones
Most eyes on them
Mine are out the window
Strange land, industrialized
Along side the Puget Sound

There is no style
Not cape cod, not post modern
Not anything: *Industrial Abandoned*
They came, made money, they left
The smoke stacks grief

Long bushy pine-needled trees
Needles clumped
Train windows black
Tunnel love
Liquor and Beer
10 percent off, Game Days
At the light at the end of the tunnel

Tacoma
Under a concrete bridge
On the other side
Derricks sit idle

A weeping willow lacks tears
Along our tracks
Homeless tents, draped tarps
A small country

A field of cabbage
A pointillist painting
Mono colored
Cold storage

“Expert Air Control”
A Van waits at crossing
Saving the planet with air control
Telephone poles mimic trees

“Longhorn Barbecue”
They’re cooked
A station
A town by the tracks
Glass enclosed green-roofed race tracks
All bets are off
A million ball park lights
The money-bagged people
The brazen angry dogs ran away
Semi-tractor trailers parking lots
Safeway warehouse
Old stale goods

Wells Fargo, no horses
Closed
Sold out
To what or to whom?
Central transport
Freight trains
K line, Haag-Lloyd, BNSF
YRC Central Transport
Fed Ex Ground
A sign, Get over Yourself
—I have

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

As a last entry to the erasure course, I wanted to use one of my own poems to erase and excavate to become my own victim to this process that would lead me to a sensitivity of how it feels to be excavated. I also felt it would look interesting as a long four-page poem—like a railroad track because I had written the original as observations from a train window and was four pages long with the fleetingness of my views.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

It had not felt like a serious poem, so I felt it could grow into something new being somewhat experimental. The four-page length would itself become a new poem about observations from a train so that visually it would be a long, drawn-out, linear poem.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

I felt as if I was becoming too flip, too negligent in keeping it obvious that it was about observations from a train with the long phrases from signs and sights. It is playful and fun, which makes it mischievous and wicked.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

It is “flock a curve” because of its obscurity. But it refers to a train hugging a curve, which is intriguing when you can see the engine from where you are sitting as a passenger.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

It feels entirely different—moves more quickly because I personally am not in a “zone” or the true creative phase but I am more in a thought process or analytical, and because my poems are often very visual, I know that I spend time in my mind recreating the feeling or the scene and most

often both. At the same time there is a less instinctual feeling in its “erasure” process because it is more playful and easier to access as there are already some ideas present.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

I did not feel glib about this process but serious and respectful; for me as an artist, the integrity of the surface, be they literature or visual art that I might collage or use in different ways, kept me mindful of the original in a way that I think is necessary to create another thing of promise.

THE BURDEN

the dawn.

a contest between the moon and the
strange half-light
of the coming day.

the calm of early morning broken by distant
voices rumblings, growing stronger.

pilgrims marching in their thousands

vast numbers

year after year,

generation after generation

connects the unbroken chain
the dim and distant past, to

the prison of tradition
prevents us from our onward march

trouble

It is

I do not want
difficult to know
it may be

necessary

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

This poem was meant to be a “political erasure.” I had already made a contemporary political poem for the first week of the course with an erasure I made from that day’s newspaper coverage of the George Floyd murder. So for this one I tried to find a more historical political source with the idea of bringing out a political message from the past that was relevant to the present reality.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

I have quite a few history books on my poor, much abused bookshelf. The source for this poem was Nehru’s *Glimpses of World History*, and this particular passage “The Burden of Tradition” was written in 1932. I chose it because there were many phrases that I found evocative as stand-alone fragments, and when I started to circle them on the source page they seemed to coalesce naturally around the theme of awakening to the realization of the inevitability of a revolution (which is a theme I think is relevant to many points in world history, including the present day). I also liked that the new title could be erased from the old one and the cohesion that followed from that.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

The hardest part was the end. I find that’s the hardest part of every erasure for me. Often, I find a piece with several great themes and images that swirl together, but since the original text is not beholden to any of my new poem’s direction, it can be challenging to find a conclusion that seems both satisfying and intentional. I was happier with this one than most, though. At first I was somewhat underwhelmed by the timid nature of the call to action, but then I realized that oftentimes people come to revolution reluctantly and the final words actually added depth to the voice of the conclusion.

The easiest part was the dawn/awakening part at the beginning. The images basically rose from the text and spun themselves together like wool.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

“A contest between the moon and the strange half-light of the coming day.” I actually said “yessss...” out loud when I saw those images crawl out of the text. They immediately foreshadowed the destination of the poem for me.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

It's way less stressful for me because I feel like, if the poem turns out horrible that's more on the source author than me. Sometimes confidence is all about finding someone else to blame. ;)

But seriously, I think the biggest difference is the idea of de-novo creation vs. creative destruction. Both can be quite satisfying, but in erasure, the feeling of trying to control a narrative that is also trying to control you is a mind space that, for me, is unique, and when one's mind wanders in unfamiliar places, it often stumbles upon unexpected beauty.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Grab an interesting source text and photocopy some pages. Read them through. Circle the phrases that draw you in (even if you are not sure why). See if all the circles lead you somewhere, and if they do, fill in the blanks with what's in between. Tell yourself that 9/10 pages will be a bust. Let the duds go. Work on the page that excites you.

JULY

1804

Sent a french man to **Liberty** with a message to invite the Indians to **meet us on the river** **Dine** under some high Trees near the high land on the L. S. a few minutes Cought three very large Catfish, one white, **those fish** are **in great plenty** on the Sides of the river and very fat, a quart of Oile Came out of the surplus of one of those fish above this high land & on the S. S. part much falling timber apparently **the ravages** of a Dreddfull hail which had **passed** obliquely **across** the river from N. W. to S. E. about twelve months Since, many trees were broken off **the ground** the trunks of which were sound and four feet in Diameter,

JULY 30TH MONDAY 1804—

Set out this morning early proceeded on **to a clear open Prarie** on the L. S. on a rise of about 70 feet higher than the bottom which is also a Prarie (both forming **Bluffs** to the river) of High **Grass** & **Plumb bush** Grapes &c. and situated above high water, in **a small Grove of timber** at the foot of the Rising Ground between **those two praries**, and below the **Bluffs** of the high Prarie **we Came** too and formed a Camp, intending to wait the return of the frenchman **& Indians**, the white horse which we found near the Kanzus river, **Died** last night

posted out our guard and sent out 4 men, Captn. Lewis & [I] went up the Bank and walked a Short Distance in the high Prarie **this Prarie** is Covered with Grass of 10 or 12 inches in height, Soil of good quality & at the Distance of about a mile still further back the Countrey **rises** about 80 or 90 feet higher, and is one Continued Plain as far as Can be seen, from the **Bluff** on the 2^d rise immediately above our Camp, the most beautifull prospect of the River up & Down and the Countrey Opsd. presented it Self which I ever beheld: **The River** meandering the open and beautifull Plains, interspersed with Groves of timber, and each point **Covered with** tall timber, Such as Willow Cotton-wood Mulberry, Elm, Sycamore, Linn [linden] & ash (The Groves contain Hickory, Walnut, coffee nut & Oake in addition)

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem? Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

I entered the class with the intention of working on erasures using my grandmother's memoir as source material. Then June 2020 and the BLM movement took over our collective consciousness. In reflecting on my white heritage and why my grandmother was able to write about her parents' immigration to Nebraska in the 1880s, I couldn't help but face the reality that indigenous peoples were forcibly cleared from that same land just decades earlier. A significant tool of Manifest Destiny and the "opening" of the frontier were the Lewis & Clark expeditions of 1803/04 and the diaries that were kept about them. For this erasure, as a companion to pieces I was working on using my grandmother's memoir, I looked up some parts of Lewis & Clark's diary that reference the specific prairie landscape of Nebraska, & the people living there, which are near to where my own Swedish ancestors settled eighty years later.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

The technical aspect of using a computer program to create this was new for me, and I don't think it looks as good as it could were I more fluent in using such programs! I did find the selection of the passage and the text pieces themselves fairly easy because I knew what I wanted to emphasize.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

I think the closing is strong: "the River / Covered with / ash."

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

I definitely underestimated the visual component of erasure prior to taking this course. It is more akin to collage work than poetry, in my opinion. I think I would consider it a hybrid form in which the visual presentation of the words is of equal importance to the words chosen—and I don't

know if I would've realized that before working in the form.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

I think nonfiction sources are a better place to start because they usually offer the chance to impose a contrary or complicating reading onto the source text. It also means you have to work hard to find ways to make words do poetic things—i.e. in the line from Lewis's diary above, the word "ash" is originally included as part of a list of types of trees, but I wanted to use it more evocatively. I feel like using nonfiction source texts lets you uncover the poetic possibilities of words in ways that haven't already been done by the author.



LOUISVILLE METRO POLICE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

GREG FISCHER
MAYOR

ROBERT J. SCHROEDER
CHIEF OF POLICE

June 19, 2020

Detective Brett Hankison #6120
Criminal Interdiction Division

Public Integrity Case #20-019

Dear

Public:

want our
determination to
deadly force
threat material is an immediate use

633 WEST JEFFERSON STREET LOUISVILLE, KY 40202
OFFICE PHONE 502.574.7660 FAX 502.574.2450

Dave Harrity

to an
actual
person

and

our community.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Schroeder
Chief of Police

RJS/WDS/dng

Cc: Lieutenant Colonel L. Chavous
Major J. Schwab
Major K. Burbrink
Wm. Dennis Sims
Professional Standards Unit

633 WEST JEFFERSON STREET LOUISVILLE, KY 40202
OFFICE PHONE 502.574.7660 FAX 502.574.2450

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

This class was a healthy and stabilizing undertaking during the pandemic and social unrest of 2020. I made this erasure in response to that chaos and particular cultural moment.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

This poem uses the language of a letter written by Robert J. Schroeder, Louisville's Police Chief, to Detective Brett Hankinson after the killing of Breonna Taylor. In my home town of Louisville, Brett Hankinson was "terminated from employment" after killing Taylor while serving a no-knock warrant. One of three officers responsible for Taylor's killing, Hankinson was the only one who received any consequences for his action. The "termination" is not even the starting line of justice. This poem is one of eight erasures of the same text. Eight is the number of bullets that hit Breonna Taylor.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

It was hard to respond to the trauma and the destruction of (yet another) black body at the hands of a systemized white supremacy, at the hands of brazen and belligerent police. As a person who does not exist in a black body, I'm hesitant to even comment on such an experience, but this was close to home in every way possible—it was not an abstraction. The easiest part was picking the source text, as it contained the sterilized diplomacy and feckless inaction of empire. The letter begs a rewrite in several ways, for several reasons.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

It is one sentence, so there isn't a favorite line per se, but I like how the exercise of making the speaker say what should have been said helped me stave off cynicism and let me feel a fuller weight of anger and fear. Coupled

with actual acts of disobedience in the street, creation adds to the action.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

Done with care, it can allow one to approach a subject, idea, or language that may be out of bounds for the creator—for personal, political, or cultural reasons. Done well, it allows the outsider enough continuity to access experiences without stealing the voice or pilfering the experience of the creator of the source text. In essence, it can provoke a shared and sincere empathy without doing violence to experience.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Get comfortable with iteration and drafting. Don't assume that the writing process is different because you're working with an artifact.

By 1963 Alabama Governor George Corley Wallace had emerged as the leading opponent to the growing civil rights movement. Six months later he gained international notoriety for his stand in the door of the University of Alabama to block the entrance of two black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, who had been order admitted by a federal judge. Between 1964 and 1976 Wallace ran for President four times (three as a Democrat and once as an Independent) exploiting what he believed was a deep-seated aversion to racial integration among Northerners as well as Southerners. Long before these events, he would at his inauguration as Governor on January 14, 1963, lay out his opposition to integration and the civil rights movement.

Today I have stood, where once Jefferson Davis stood, and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then that from this Cradle of the Confederacy, this very Heart Great Anglo-Saxon Southland, that today we sound the drum for freedom as have our generations of forebears before us done, time and time again through history. Let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us and send our answer to the tyranny that

clanks its chains upon the South. the greatest people that have ever trod in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny... and I say... today... segregation tomorrow... segregation forever

The Washington, D.C. school riot report is disgusting and revealing. We will not sacrifice our children to any such type school system—and you can write that down. The federal troops in Mississippi could be better used guarding the safety of the citizens of Washington, D.C., where it is even unsafe to walk or go to a ballgame—and that is the nation's capitol. I was safer in a B-29 bomber over Japan during the war in an air raid, than the people of Washington are walking to the White House neighborhood. A closer example is Atlanta. The city officials fawn for political reasons over school integration and THEN build barricades to stop residential integration—what hypocrisy!

Let us send this message back to Washington by our representatives who are with us today—that from this day we are standing up, and the

heel of tyranny does not fit the neck of an upright man . . . that we intend to take the offensive and carry our fight for freedom across the nation, wielding the balance of power we know we possess in the Southland . . . that WE, not the insipid bloc of voters of some sections, will determine in the next election who shall sit in the White House of these United States . . . That from this day, from this hour . . . from this minute . . . we give the word of a race of honor that we will tolerate their boot in our face no longer . . . and let those certain judges put that in their opium pipes of power and smoke it for what it is worth.

And while the manufacturing industries of free enterprise have been coming to our state in increasing numbers, attracted by our bountiful natural resources, our growing numbers of skilled workers and our favorable conditions, their present rate of settlement here can be increased from the trickle they now represent to a stream of enterprise and endeavor, capital and expansion that can join us in our work of development and enrichment of the educational futures of our children, the opportunities of our citizens and the fulfillment of our talents as God has given them to us. To realize our ambitions and to bring to fruition our dreams, we as Alabamians must take cognizance of the world about us. We must re-define our heritage, re-school our thoughts in the lessons our forefathers knew so well, firsthand, in order to function and to grow and to prosper. We can no longer hide our head in the sand and tell ourselves that the ideology of our free fathers is not being attacked and is not being threatened by another idea . . . for it is. We are faced with an idea that if a centralized government assume enough authority, enough power over its people, that it can provide a utopian life. . . that if given the power to dictate, to forbid, to require, to demand, to distribute, to edict and to judge what is best and enforce that will produce only "good". . . and it shall be our father . . . and our God. . .

We have replaced faith with fear . . . government has become our god.



. . . without faith in God . . . and without the wisdom of God. It is a system that is the very opposite of Christ for it feeds and encourages everything degenerate and base in our people as it assumes the responsibilities that we ourselves should assume. Its pseudo-liberal spokesmen and some Harvard advocates have never examined the logic of its substitution of what it calls "human rights" for individual rights, for its propaganda play on words has appeal for the unthinking. Its logic is totally material and irresponsible as it runs the full gamut of human desires . . . including the theory that everyone has voting rights without the spiritual responsibility of preserving freedom. Our founding fathers recognized those rights . . . but only within the framework of those spiritual responsibilities. But the strong, simple faith and sane reasoning of our founding fathers has long since been forgotten as the so-called "progressives" tell us that our Constitution was written for "horse and buggy" days . . . so were the Ten Commandments.

But we warn those, of any group, who would follow the false doctrine of communistic amalgamation that we will not surrender our system of government . . . our freedom of race and religion . . . that freedom was won at a hard price and if it requires a hard price to retain it . . . we are able . . . and quite willing to pay it.

great divinely inspired system of freedom . . . and as God is our witness, Southerners will save it.

Let us, as Alabamians, grasp the hand of destiny and walk out of the shadow of fear . . . and fill our divine destination. Let us not simply defend . . . but let us assume the leadership of the fight and carry our leadership across this nation. God has placed us here in this crisis . . . let us not fail in this . . . our most historical moment.

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

I had been affected and concerned about the divisive climate surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement. There has been a rhetoric that I wanted to change, and I thought by taking a blatantly racial rant and moving it in the opposite direction, I could neutralize the racial hatred.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

I wanted to find a text that was blatantly racial and thought of the segregationist Governor George Wallace. This inaugural speech was well known as “Segregation Now, Segregation Forever.” I searched the internet and found the speech. The picture was an image from one of the news channels, and I chose it from the Black Lives Matter protests. I felt it symbolized the “rising up” that Dr. King emphasized.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

By far the hardest part was the technical aspect. It was very difficult for me to upload the picture and insert it into the poem. It took longer than the actual erasure itself. The easiest part was being able to erase online rather than by pen. This was my first attempt at trying to erase using a computer program.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

“God has placed us here in this crisis...let us not fail in this...our most historical moment.”

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

It is fun to see what can emerge from the words of others. It is like trimming a tree and finding out it is a rare flower.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Be reckless, fearless, and enjoy the process.

under the Restraints here laid upon them, have become extravagant and abominably Vicious. Pleece 'tis, that the Nap-tiness of *England* has been but for a time, as it was foretold, and not for a long time, as has been doo'd 'd for us. A Curse of Calamity has long follow'd this Plantation; and we have all the Reason imaginable to ascribe it unto the Rebuke of Heaven upon us for our manifold Apostasies; we make no right use of our Disasters: If we do not, Remember whence we are fallen, and repent, and do the first works. But yet our Afflictions may come under a further Consideration with us: There is a further Cause of our Afflictions, whose due must be given him.

§ 11. The New-Englanders are a People of God settled in those, which were once the Devil's Territories; and it may easily be supposed that the Devil was exceedingly disturbed, when he perceived such a People here accomplishing the Promise of old made unto our Blessed Jesus, That He should have the Utmost parts of the Earth for his Possession. There was not a greater Uproar among the Ephesians, when the Gospel was first brought among them, than there was among, The Rowers of the Air (after whom those Ephesians walked) when first the Silver Trumpets of the Gospel here made the Joyful Sound. The Devil thus irritated, immediately try'd all sorts of Methods to overturn this poor Plantation: and so much of the Church, as was Fled into this Wilderness, immediately found, The Serpent cast out of his Mouth a Flood for the carrying of it away. I believe, that never were more Satanical Devices used for the Unsetting of any People under the Sun, than what have been Employ'd for the Extirpation of the Vine which God has here Planted, Casting out the Heathen, and preparing a Room before it, and causing it to take deep Root, upon All the Land, so that it sent its Branches into the Atlantic Sea Eastward, and its Branches into the Connecticut River Westward, and the Hills were covered with the shadows thereof. But, All these Attempts of Hell, have hitherto been Abortive,

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

Anger was my catalyst, followed by a more productive desire to diminish the power of patriarchal pontificating by finding the underbelly of the message.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

The source is “On Witchcraft,” by Cotton Mather (1692), and is easily found in various forms online. I wanted to explore the cultural misogyny of my ancestors and how unequivocally enmeshed they were with their rigid religious beliefs.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

Once I found the idea within the words, the most challenging part was finding the specifics I needed to steer the poem. For me, the easiest part of any erasure is selecting the source texts. It might be the political maelstrom we’re living through, but I found that I enjoy taking words of patriarchal figures and changing the message.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

“causing deep root and shadows”

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

Since the world has been on fire, I have been paralyzed artistically and have not been able to write poetry. This form has allowed me to continue interacting with poetry. Something about erasure/blackout seems to take off the pressure and lets me play with words and ideas.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Consider making a few copies of your source text to play with. If you’re using an actual book, slap that thing down on a copy machine and make copies of the page. It will let you explore and feel less pressure to “get it right.” There is no “right.”

