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Cover artwork by Tom Chandler

**Origami Poetry Project™**

*Oyster Envy*

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## *Oyster Envy*

Tribal Prayer

Small flawed god,  
more us than we are,  
stitcher of the deerskin,  
flenser of the whale  
who built our lives  
one million seasons ago  
to pull the canoe prow  
out into the raging gray  
mountains of the ocean  
to stuff the nets with salmon,  
the river weir with crabs,  
push along the rock trail  
of this life we never asked for,  
who makes up any reason at all  
for why you are the way you are:  
killer of children, maker  
of cruel men, slave owner of the kind,  
who decides on a whisper why  
we must become whatever it is  
you want but won't tell us.

American Backwards

Apologies all around,  
the helicopter lifts  
from the important lawn,  
she gives him back his ring,  
he trades in the Hummer,  
their children fade  
to drooping moons,  
all the tiny phones snap shut,  
crawl back inside their pockets,  
the malls lapse into forest,  
the wind inhales,  
the water returns as blue sky,  
blue sky with perfect clouds,  
everybody finally gets full credit,  
a few get just what they deserve,  
she gets accepted to graduate school,  
he becomes a nurse's aide,  
every veyto gets overturned,  
everyone gets laid.

Oyster Envy

There's something to be said for being  
just stomach and anus with no mind,  
locked away in a little sealed world,  
complete with a sky of its own design,  
as if we too could trap sand on our tongues  
and refuse to talk or eat for years,  
close ourselves off between tight  
hemispheres, dream vague scenes  
of the bottom of the sea or of sliding down  
somebody's giant black throat  
not caring if we're asleep or awake,  
ignoring the rich ache of sandgrit building  
slowly into this perfect pearl, this beauty  
that's been welling up inside us all along.

Bourassa

We were told he'd been tortured  
on the death march from Bataan, that  
his hair had blanched white overnight  
though he'd been just twenty four.  
Creaking his rocker on the porch next door,  
starting out at the lake and smoking,  
we kids too numb to ever ask, basking  
in the whispered music of his pain.  
The summer backlit every rain and  
fireflies sparked each sunset; we  
won the war over and over again,  
air rifles and dirt bombs and  
Bourassa rose stiffly while we weren't looking,  
faded into the crowds of women and men  
kissing and dancing in sepi newsreels,  
a sea of hats, the confetti falling like snow  
across his secrets.

Lascaux

The plot still unfolds from left to right,  
an ancient comic strip in stone  
still thicker than a blood clot.

Sixteen thousand years have passed  
inside a single minute, but the bison's  
horns are still sharp as hunger

and the dancing shaman's handprints  
still as intricate as fossilized ferns,  
each whorl where he carefully pressed his fingers

unmatched by anyone born before or since,  
as if he is still trying to tell us  
just exactly who he thought he was.