

TIME IS EVOLUTION OF OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

People who tend the earth know there is no such thing as loss, only misplacement.

I returned to three years of neglect in the garden when the coronavirus called me home. The garlic, unharvested, had gone feral again: wispy leaves of allium grass. Nettles yellowing in place, overtaken by alehoof. Multiple autumns' worth of leaves wadded in the furrows between unkempt onions, dandelions, meager nubs of new life struggling to nudge up through thick thatch and stubble.

The prairie was the prairie, in its ipseity.

On the news, farmers were being interviewed about having to waste entire fields of crops, production facilities euthanizing livestock while Americans a hundred miles away don't know if they will be able to afford food a month from now, or tomorrow. Our global economy, palimpsest of human collateral and industrial efficiency, has been brought to a standstill by the microscopic fact of viral shedding.

In the Hawaiian language, the way to say the future is *ka wā ma hope* and *hope* means "behind," "in back of." The past, *ka wā ma mua*, is the time in front of us. The way the oarsperson seated at the center thwart rows with their back to where we are heading.

Are you staying a holding pattern, as though the future had gone missing, stolen by a forecast of impending cytokine storm?

Imagine the way water percolates down a sloping turf, crisscrossed with roots, held close to the earth for a spell of days under the humidity of foliage lushly over ground, pulling the moisture up in an act of anti-gravity, and transpiring.

Imagine the way a virus spreads, shedding as droplets.

"Future" and "past" are Latinate words and thoughts, creeping into English and other tongues through the spillover of *civilitās*.

Last Fall in Catalonia I visited a camp-in of protesters, squatting at the intersection of two major arteries in Barcelona. A banner flapped in the wind: *NO TENIM FUTUR, NO TENIM POR*. (We have no future, we have no fear). A week later unarmed agitators set the roundabouts on fire to blockade platoons of armored robocops with assault rifles. Ask them and they will tell you: they are only using rubber bullets.

A spirit is a cycle.

George Floyd.

Did they take your future or did you lose your chance to imprint yourself with the lovingness of your grace on this future string of moments they stole from you?

I live in the country and the city. And for months I have had the uncanny experience of being able to drive my car for an hour back and forth between an eternally ordinary present of life-as-it-always-is and something that looks and feels like an apocalypse. How can these two realities exist side by side in the same moment?

Flailing for some semblance of control, I took a spade to the overgrown clusters of bulb divisions, flipping the lawn upside down one shovel strike at a time to make space to spread out tiny bulbs of garlic individually, even though it was already April. Working in the cold rain I slogged on halfway through before turning in my shovel and leaving the rest for next year.

What happened before stands before us, becomes our future.

A month later in May, the unthinned, feral ones were larger than the tended ones I'd dug up and planted individually; with a gentle pull the smallest came up from the bunch, leaving behind one per clump and garlic for breakfast.

Black raspberries in the ditch along the conventional ag field.

Imagine how time goes shedding its course, seeking opportunity, plenitude.

In the overgrown hedgerow wild grape vines where summertime migrants must have dropped them. When I scythed out the brome grass to release them I stuck the apple tree's dead branches in the ground for them to trellis up.

A phrase we ought repeat: *It's not the end of the world.*

We are living with a society that has chronically divested from the strong love force that makes life possible, and murderously seeks to silence those who still see it, who have a conscience.

You don't change the future by focusing on the future. You tend the future by peering hard into the present, by what is before you.

Everything we need is growing all around us. It's time to reclaim the pre-Edenic beauty of being a human being in the world.

These are not the end times; these are the beginning times. People who tend the earth will know what I am talking about.