

We have to help each other mourn for what we all love and are losing day by day... We know what it feels like to lose everything, and we know the rage of helplessness in the face of government indifference. Maybe this summer is the turning point, where our collective grief turns to action and we recognise the knowledge that First Nations people want to share, to make sure these horrors are never repeated. Our precious country needs us...

We need to resist the seductions of melancholia with its blame, easy answers, and slick photo ops and ads. Let's trust in each other sufficiently to mourn fully all we have lost of our people, country, wildness and homes; for the frightening spectre that this may be the new normal; that the drought may not break; that we have made a terrible mistake in pushing this global warming too far and too hard. Together we can have hope in the force of life to create something new for all of us out of this season of sorrow. There must be room to mourn on these new fire fields. It is our job to return to the work of mourning, to practise the 'public performance of mourning' unmolested by anyone.

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THE FREE AND THE BRAVE

BY ROBERT DINAPOLI

an unquiet meditation on the acquittal of impeached president Donald J. Trump

Above Pompeii, Vesuvius lies cold.
The earth has not disgorged enteric fire
nor punched the sky with plumes that weep black tears.
Yet still this dust chokes street and door and throat.
Its swirls cannot be fought or swept away.
Its grit seeks out each innermost recess,
fouls reason's gears. Imagination's winds
it weights like stones strapped to a sparrow's wings.

Councils clot with hammer-wielding clods
who read the world's each wrinkle as a nail,
can scarce read up from down or near from far.
Their blunderings have thumped up all this dust
to shutter vision and fling distracted minds
like fish or sheep that swerve from terror's grin
into the waiting maws of wolves and sharks.
Laws and constitutions lie forsworn.

Tyrants shed compunction to unmask,
divest themselves of all vestigial cant
that prates of freedom, enterprise and truth,
and, hooting all the while with pirate mock,
swill rancid wine to toast their victory.
Thus now, once more, as just before the flood,
we watch as giants scour the earth of life,
and ash falls sifting silent from the air.

Robert DiNapoli is a medievalist, translator and poet. A collection of his poems, *Engelboc*, was recently published by Littlefox Press. His website is www.themelbourne.literatureseminars.com.au.