

Raye Hendrix

Southern Thesaurus

The Devil's beating his wife
which is to say the world
shimmers like a God
-sized fistful of finely
powdered pearls.

Out yonder way
by which I mean anything
beyond the point past
which from here
we cannot see.

That dog won't hunt
is hopeless and when
the weatherman says

polygon
it means bathtub,
basement, ditch—
nothing to do with math.

Bless your heart
is not a blessing.

There are many kinds of
Coke.

Any woman
in the family way
had better have a husband.

.22
is how fathers threaten
other people's sons
so their daughters don't
end up being

dog won't hunt
women
in the family way,
also known as

ruined.

Concubine
my grandfather called her,
the unmarried woman
who lived with the

lawyer
(which rhymes with “flaw”
and most nearly means
“sinner”) in the trailer
down the street.

Concubine.

No child of mine
is complicated, refers
any parents’ offspring who
is liberal, an atheist, or gay.

Failure
is any parent whose child
turns out liberal, or atheist,
or gay.

Gettin’ Saved
or
a good whippin’
can, God Willing, fix it all.

Tea
is sweet and cold unless
specified.

Bible
means “law.” If you ask for
help you’re

soft
but you’ll get it. If you ask for

Coke
we will answer, “What kind?”

Pinson

What will it take to stop thinking
of here as home? I stay, I go, I come

again—even the shifting skyline
seems the same, new buildings owned

by old money, old trees felled
for a different kind of growth,

the streets still keepers
of settler's names.

The Mayor died but now there's
another reclining in his chair.

Always more, an abundance of Mayors,
a plague. The Dairy Queen torn

down and resurrected as a failing
strip mall is still the place

that used to be the Dairy Queen.
The husk of the grocer on Old

Springville Road still wears the ghost
of its former life, Piggly Wiggly

shadowed into brick by years of heat
and sun. This entire miserable town—

its dilapidated roads pothole-pocked
and going nowhere—a relic of itself

inhabited by rot, the kind that sticks
around, keeps itself alive, blooms

sickly where nothing else will—
where the people are proud

to be mold, clinging to something
Confederate, fungal spores spawning

new generations in shades
of antique red.

But there's jasmine here. There's light.
The tea is cold and smooth and sweet

and brewed by a windowed sun. Dogs
wear no collars. Cats lie fat and happy

on the warm roofs of trucks—fed full
by field mice and table scraps from

women with curlers in their hair—
unowned and belonging to us all.

The mountain breeze cools the air,
ripples the lake to diamonds, the algae

a million emeralds sunk just beyond
the shore, a jeweled city for channel

cat and bass. And the people plant
things. Put down roots. Let kudzu

stabilize disintegrating barns, hold up
the walls. Is it wrong of me to want

this to survive? To die? To go, come
home, then leave again and leave

my ghost behind?

While the Amazon Burns I Come Across an Ebay Listing for a Set of Human Teeth

The box arrives wrapped in gold
paper, glittering giftwrap, smaller

than expected, heavier. Empty
save a pair of pliers and a note:

Don't you want to eat the world?
The blood drips, and I do.



Raye Hendrix is a queer poet from Alabama. She earned her BA and MA from Auburn University and her MFA from the University of Texas at Austin. Raye is the winner of the 2019 Keene Prize for Literature and the Patricia Aakhus Award (*Southern Indiana Review*). She has also been a finalist for the Keene Prize, the Fania Kruger Fellowship in Writing, and Tinderbox Poetry Journal's Brett Elizabeth Jenkins Poetry Prize, and received honorable mentions for poetry from AWP's Intro Journals Project and *Southern Humanities Review's* Witness Poetry Prize. Raye's work has been featured on *Poetry Daily* and has appeared in *32 Poems*, *Southern Indiana Review*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Cimarron Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, and elsewhere. Raye is a PhD Fellow at the University of Oregon where she researches Deaf Poetry, Poetics, and Crip Theory.