**Under Paumanok Heavens**

*for the island boy I married, and for Elizabeth Thunderbird Haile*

Under these Paumanok heavens,

ceilinged in shapes green and changing,

in an Indian summer leaning in to sing

Autumn’s throaty notes, I sit

at a coppery round, drinking cinnamon

decaf as I wait. So much has filled me,

stretched me, moved me to this place.

The leaves continue, ever

turning into the breeze,

ever falling, sprouting, lining walkways

on new seasons, generations.

This fish shape has spawned so many perfect souls

living and moving, adding theirs to the song

of the fields; the beach plum, scrub pines, tulip trees,

the dreamers, whose roof sports Orion

and floor is manicured by new citizens and old.

For the tribes that once peopled this land

from fish’s mouth to fish’s fins.

For the whalers, the oystermen, horsemen,

the fisherman and the fishers of men,

the first responders, the farmers, woodsmen,

the milkmen, the shipbuilders, authors, actors,

composers, performers, athletes and patriots,

the pilots, the engineers, builders, the mail carriers,

the operators, blacksmiths, construction workers,

the mechanics, the nurses, the doctors, the patients

I am thankful.

For the Declaration Signers,

the Rough Riders,

the Music Makers,

the Flying Flappers,

for the Bards of Long Island, thankfulness is mine.

For the pilots of sea and air,

Pirates of sea and rail,

the Robber Barons, the Wall Street wonks,

for all the voices that make us sing,

all the grout that holds these human tiles together,

the light that shines from so much more than our lighthouses.

For all the villages, hamlets, towns, open spaces that help

us to stop and breathe, for the cleansing fires that renew,

the grains of sand that burnish us bright,

the weather that binds us.

I take in the low tide through the pines,

watch the deer move among us, celebrate

the snapping turtles, the late fireflies, the song

of cicada and cricket, Mockingbird medley

and Mourning Dove,

from Bay Ridge to Montauk,

from Sands Point to Babylon.

Thankful for a night of a thousand strings

stars of a thousand nights.

for the knots of pace and restraint,

for the skies that delight and warn,

for the seasons that tease, escape and return.

For the highways, WPA roads, country lanes,

the parkways, the carriage roads, the grand concourses,

the pathways through the woods seen

and unseen, I am thankful.

Gratitude for the rivers, lakes, channels

that afford us a view of the neighboring shores,

a way to get there and back again..

For the archivists, the preservers of the faith,

the life, the history of this place, the stragglers,

the passers through, the lingerers,

these add to the very air that we breathe,

make us a big fish in a bigger pond,

but the only fish of its kind.

For the lilac that bloomed in the dooryard,

the daisies that stowed away

and disembarked at Montauk,

for laundry signals, spy rings

and revolutionary fervor— these things

that shaped Long Island like the tides,

carving herself into the memories of anyone

who has ever lived here, I am thankful.

Squalls may toss,

storms may unsettle harbors and shorelines, but the heart

of this Long Island girl, born in the town of Levitt,

raised just south of Camelot, is forever

grateful under Paumanok Heavens.

*by Linda Trott Dickman*