



Pa'ga-dit (Utah Lake)

***Rachel White***

*Pa'ga-dit*

*Pa'ga-di-da-ma*

desert miracle:  
freshwater creeks & rivers  
converge in silver streams

through reeds and marsh  
to shelter birds & native fish –  
thirteen kinds there were once

*Pa'ga-dit*

*Pa'ga-di-da-ma*

*pa* meaning water  
& *utah* may well be Shoshone  
for the reeds, before the Utes

were forced out  
of the mountains to barren lands  
“settlers” didn’t want

*Pa'ga-dit*  
*Pa'ga-di-da-ma*

for twenty thousand years, maybe twice that  
a quarry southwest of the lake  
supplied obsidian points, black

glass glinting like water at night  
beside footpaths from spring to spring  
all the way to the ocean

*Pa'ga-dit*  
*Pa'ga-di-da-ma*

I am walking around unconscious  
cut off from continuity with the past  
humanity who lived in accord –

holy water, cleanse my blood  
of conflict and massacres, connect  
me to look history square in the face

*Pa'ga-dit*  
*Pa'ga-di-da-ma*

the Timpanogos, still here –  
are dispossessed of the place  
central to ceremonial knowledge

of generations; to further deface  
the sacred water is obscene –  
like proposing a condo project  
on Jerusalem's Temple Mount

*Pa'ga-dit*  
*Pa'ga-di-da-ma*

when in doubt, my best  
advice is to align  
with native people, ask them

what they think & quietly,  
like the still waters  
of a peaceful lake, really listen –

**Rachel White** makes poems that recognize all knowledge and sustenance comes from the land, praise the more-than-human world, and question the social relations destroying all that sustains us. She believes restoring ecological health to Utah Lake and Great Salt Lake is critical for this region to remain habitable.

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