

## Trophic Cascade

by Camille T. Dungy

**After the reintroduction of gray wolves to Yellowstone** and, as anticipated, their culling of deer, trees grew beyond the deer stunt of the midcentury. In their up reach songbirds nested, who scattered seed for underbrush, and in that cover warrened snowshoe hare. Weasel and water shrew returned, also vole, and so came soon hawk and falcon, bald eagle, kestrel, and with them hawk shadow, falcon shadow. Eagle shade and kestrel shade haunted newly berried runnels where deer no longer rummaged, cautious as they were, now, of being surprised by wolves. Berries brought bear, while undergrowth and willows, growing now right down to the river, brought beavers, who dam. Muskrats came to the dams, and tadpoles. Came, too, the night song of the fathers of tadpoles. With water striders, the dark gray American dipper bobbed in fresh pools of the river, and fish stayed, and the bear, who fished, also culled deer fawns and to their kill scraps came vulture and coyote, long gone in the region until now, and their scat scattered seed, and more trees, brush, and berries grew up along the river that had run straight and so flooded but thus dammed, compelled to meander, is less prone to overrun. Don't you tell me this is not the same as my story. All this life born from one hungry animal, this whole, new landscape, the course of the river changed, I know this. I reintroduced myself to myself, this time a mother. After which, nothing was ever the same.

## Community Transformation Reflection Poem

- 1) **Read the poem** “Trophic Cascade” by Camille T. Dungy
  - How does *nature* transform from the beginning to the end of this poem?
  - How does the *speaker* transform in the poem?
  - What is a “trophic cascade”? If you don't know, use what happens in the poem as your context clue!
- 2) **Make a list:** during the first few day/weeks of your awareness of COVID-19 and its impact on your local community, what behaviors/events (positive and/or negative) did you witness that you had not noticed before?
- 3) **Review your list** and select an event/behavior that **made you feel hopeful.**
- 4) **Write a poem that begins with “After the reintroduction of \_\_\_\_\_ into the community.”** Fill in the blank with this event/behavior. Some examples: “After the reintroduction of checking on your elderly neighbors into the community” or “After the reintroduction of drive-by birthday parties into the community”
- 5) **Next, continue your poem:** who did you/your family/your community/your city become? What was the metaphorical “trophic cascade” of your community? Finally, imagine what you/we/this place *could* become as a result of the “re-introduction” you have named.

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