

## **Polar Bears Drowning**

the news isn't so bad today  
two crows perch on a large stone in the meadow

then fly off looking for a few morsels  
but the barren is pasture

the war isn't going as badly as it could  
meanwhile I wait for the tax refund

which a lot of people will get this year  
except people who have no income

but it's not so bad since they pay no taxes  
the two crows perch on the stone again

haven't there been worse wars  
I really don't mind reading the news

as much as most people  
many more people have died in other wars

that's good news  
this coffee isn't too bad

and the weather isn't as bad today  
so the mail probably won't be too late

it's not as bad here as in some countries  
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probably the president will do something  
I think he cares about bears

the war isn't going so badly now  
the check will be in the mail

if it comes today  
those crows haven't moved

but one flaps its black wings  
so it must be okay

## A Protest Rally for the **Bold-faced Hyphen**

Protest the extinction  
of the **Bold-faced Hyphen!**  
The once-numerous hyphen  
is all but extinct.  
I have seen them  
flying together in pairs,  
making a mad dash—  
to safety.

Fly, fly away quickly,  
before you too become extinct  
and forgotten—  
or held captive and misused,  
for that is the apostrophe's fate—  
held prisoner in plurals,  
on road signs,  
in mis-punctuated ads.

Mourn the apostrophe's demise.  
Solidarity  
Save the apostrophe  
Save the hyphen  
Free them from their sentences  
Now!  
Free the apostrophe  
Now!  
Save the **Bold-faced Hyphen**  
Now!

## **The Garter Snake**

lies coiled on quartzite  
high on Worcester Mountain  
it's barely warm enough  
for a reptile to emerge  
onto its favorite stone  
coiled facing west  
in April sun  
waiting for flies

for months he's waited  
sheltered in a granite crevice  
covered by three feet of snow  
now he's ready for sun

who knows why people hate snakes  
but human hatred runs deep as Genesis  
hard as quartzite veins in stone  
this year new people to hate  
with the same old swords, nooses and missiles

his long beige stripe is still  
his brown scales barely quiver  
he watches me but doesn't  
even flick his tongue

when hate's all around  
and it gets too cold  
I'd like to leave it all  
crawl into a crevice  
with the garter snake  
maybe someday when the sun's warm again  
slither out across stone  
onto the mountain

## Alligators

Around the bend in the canal  
we startle an enormous alligator  
sunning, awakened by the clack  
of our canoe paddles, he splashes  
into dark water and slides beneath the canoe.

My heart beats faster—*you were scared*  
she says—*well he was only six feet away*—  
but other alligators ignore us, barely  
turning their cloudy eyes, unwilling  
to relinquish their sunny places.

Alligators are accustomed to daily  
canoeists paddling the Loxahatchee,  
maybe they know it's Sunday and surely  
they know east where the first sun warms  
their cold hides as they slither to the bank  
to bask; I offer him coffee from my thermos—

*Coffee with sugar, alligator?*  
Sugar plantations and suburbs  
have drained the Everglades and the Loxahatchee  
nearly killing off the Seminole and the alligators  
who now emblazon football pennants, sweatshirts  
and coffee mugs: *Gators! Seminoles!*

The alligator basks and smiles,  
he knows who's drifting to extinction first—  
we canoe around the bend where five  
more alligators sleep in the sun.

## **I Want To Be Your Tom**

Each night I climb your fence  
I want to yowl at the moon  
to growl and hiss at any other male  
to crawl into your bed

I want to purr and lick inside your ears  
to sniff you all over  
to look in your eyes  
to smell you so strongly there's no other scent

I want to lay with you and put my paws around you  
to lap you until you cry *mrow tdrow*  
to feel you in heat, to feel you purr and yelp  
I want you to dig your claws into my fur

And if you'll have me across your fence  
I want us to have ten kittens  
I hope you dodge every car and dog  
I want us to curl together and purr when our fur is gray