

D O N A L D W E L C H

How to Go Grocery Shopping with a Vietnam Veteran

Don't leave him alone in the seafood section
where the red body of a snapper
is laid out on a pile of ice, sleek
and greasy from all the fish oil,
eyes staring up through the Plexiglas,
mouth left open as though asphyxiated.

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King Philip's War

I stood on the corner of Wait and Pequot
in Roxbury, confusing the Pequot War with yours.
I'm sorry. They shared the same paragraph
on the glossy page of my expensive textbook.

You wanted to push the Puritans out of your Plymouth.
They just wanted to survive. None of the settlers
were interested in the implications of Manifest Destiny,
you were just the enemy, an obstacle put before them.

Victors have the privilege of hindsight, the luxury of guilt.
This is still your Plymouth, but there is no new Metacomet.
Church and his rangers defeated you and your spirit.
Your legacy is a sidewalk littered with Stop & Shop bags.

I don't think I've won, I don't think of historic significance,
I'm not interested in socio-economic dynamics,
I just like my rent below \$650 a month,
because honestly, it's all I can afford right now.

The militias called you "King Philip" to mock you.
Killing a caricature is easier than killing a man.
Still, the title demands nobility, implies royalty,
you were the only King born on American soil.

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