

Who am I?

Lights across the dark river splinter
into whispers, alien languages somehow familiar.
Under a city within a city patiently earth transforms
layer by layer: bronze-skinned men arranged with honour
plantation slaves planted with contempt
ragged flesh scraps from an explosion
all the guts and gore of an abattoir, more slaves
unchained dead from their ocean voyage.

I point at the French Quarter over the water,
thread ferries to Canal Street like voodoo beads.

Soldiers build a tier here from the attack on New Orleans.
Big Muddy chews at me, swallows mansions and graves alike.

Men weigh me with attachments: ships, wharves,
workshops, terminals, foundries where they make
mechanical parts for locomotive or Leviathan; layers
of labourers now, riot-killed when official arson
destroys workshops ahead of the Union. Men
break open warehouses, torch or toss to the river
what they can't carry: rice, bacon, sugar, molasses
with Big Muddy gnawing at me like I'm gumbo.

Another blaze; in the ashes I suckle a military pup;
it becomes a Navy Station. Layers of anger
almost levelled in a wind that takes the bigger city.
I recover without flooding. My top layer looks
like concrete and asphalt, but it's a live book cover
layers of pages my life's story. I am Algiers Louisiana.

Mercedes Webb-Pullman graduated from IIML Victoria University Wellington New Zealand MA in Creative Writing 2011. Her work appears online and in print (*Danse Macabre*, *Black Mail Press*, *Turbine*, *4th Floor*, *Swamp*, *Reconfigurations*, *The Electronic Bridge*, *Bone Orchard Poetry*, *poetryrepairs*, *Connotations Press*, *The Red Room*, *anthologies*, and books *Looking for Kerouac*, *After the Danse*, *Numeralla Dreaming*, and *Food 4 Thought*) She lives on the Kapiti Coast, New Zealand, and is Lazarus Media LLC's Assistant Editor, Pacific, and Editor-in-Chief, DM du Jour.