



**Hell in the Hallows
(Hurricane Helene)**

If you have never written a poem from a book or newspaper article, it is high time you did. The needs of the anthropocene are relentless and, as poets, we need to witness, document and communicate the potency of the times in which we live. We also need to tell it slant in the news that stays news and achieve a deeper level of consciousness than the first rough draft of history to which journalism aspires.

The method was expertly laid out by Joanne Kyger in her book on H.P. Blavatsky. (See this exercise!) She was a fan of Ed Sanders and he chewed through history like Si'sEyul and left the gorgeous castings of *America: A History in Verse*.

What happened in Hurricane Helene was historic and hopefully will be the catalyst for Climate Change-deniers. That the area affected included the site of Black Mountain College brings it home in a way to me, because so much of my stance toward poem making was influenced by the culture of



that college, the ethos of the practice of an artist being how one not only makes a thing, but makes a life. That is in part why workshops are called *Poetics as Cosmology* and *Life as Rehearsal for the Poem*.

So, read the article. It is short, compelling and well-designed, with contemporary web features that bring out salient points. As you read, note certain phrases and facts. Note the names of affected towns and other luminous details. Maybe follow your gut to include short histories of some of the towns. Why is it called

“Chimney Rock?” What things have happened there before? If you feel called to any “rabbit holes” follow them, take notes, bookmark pages (Command + D on a mac) so you can find them again. Find a phrase that resonates and start from there. Don’t be afraid to paste in segments that explain the science of what happened. The scientific language can allow for a surprise mind quality because it can be strange to the ears of non-scientists. What are the native plants that Helene inundated? What historical figures are these parts named after? What is there legacy? What is the legacy of this occasion of experience?

Any newspaper or magazine article can work for such an exercise, but this one seems rather compelling and there can never be enough art and science that calls attention to the obvious, that Western culture is disconnected from the biosphere that sustains us. This is one reason why being connected to the place where you live and committing to that place is at the core of our poetics/cosmology.

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9:40am
5-OCT-2024
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