

## JOSEPH MILLAR

# Working Writer

for Steve M.

No one wants to go anywhere  
in this muzzling, gauzy heat,  
especially the tenured poets  
who stay indoors

writing fondly of children  
they don't have to raise  
and quietly revising their poems of place

with a French watchband hiding the skin  
of the wrist, the delicate,  
flawed blue veins,

and the drunk night lurching  
around in the field  
covering its wounded face.

This time of year my carpenter friend  
drives his screenplays down to L.A.,  
the scary one about crossing the border,  
the one about Gorgeous George.

There's white gravel crackling under  
his truck tires, pinion gear  
thumping in the rear end,

the holy dawn  
the color of fresh linen,  
pale sky over the sunflowers—

each almond grove  
on its knees in the dirt, each  
dusty gas pump and palm tree  
covering the cracked, distant stars.

Except for his thick hands, knotted and large,  
he could be the ghost of Edgar Poe  
waiting outside the agent's door,  
takeout coffee splashed on his shoe,  
his heart full of hope and woe.

**Joseph Millar's** four collections are *Overtime* (2013), *Fortune* (2007), *Blue Rust* (2012), and *Kingdom* (2017), all available from Carnegie Mellon University Press. *A New and Selected* is due out next year. Millar grew up in Pennsylvania, attended the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars, and spent the next thirty years in the San Francisco Bay Area working at a variety of jobs, from telephone repairman to commercial fisherman. His work has won fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as a Pushcart Prize. He teaches in Pacific University's low-residency MFA program and at North Carolina State University.

## NATHAN PANKRATZ

*Fire on the Mountain*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 in



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