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more and more compactly, even approaching the ultimate economy of crystalline symmetries. And at times, when the movement of tectonic plates increases the pressure upon me, I have yielded to that pressure and accepted metamorphosis, becoming my daughter, marble. But as limestone, my general intention is modest: simply to settle down.

And I did so. I ceased to be ooze and took form. There was of course no hurry about it and I really have no idea how long it took, since I was under deep water or other more recent deposits that weighed on me, compressed me, obliged me to solidify, and kept me in the dark. All the time I was becoming limestone I never saw the moon.

I confess that the moon draws me with something more than gravity. Perhaps it is its lightness, its levity? I don't know. My sister oolitic limestone is made entirely of ooids, tiny moons that she forms around sand grains. And my shells and tests are modeled on the moon, being spherical or rounded, and mostly white. I like the shining white of the moon at night and its translucent, dead, dull white in daytime. I have an affinity for whiteness and the moon. That is of course more visible when I have been transformed into marble, but you can see it in me, too, if you look. So I was in my quiet way happy when a change of seabeds or the labors of orogeny lifted me up from under water or under ground and I could again reply to the moon's whiteness with my own.

It is interesting to be quarried, with all the little flesh beings scurrying about in and on me. Some of them have begun to make shells, as I did, only theirs are metal. I feel sisterly toward them. After all, I have been little flesh beings, too. I have scurried, or anyhow drifted.

And to be cut into blocks and built with reminds me somewhat of my own decision to cease oozing and take shape. Some of the forms I have been cut and fitted into are quite as imaginative and various as my foraminifera.

The quarrying and building all began quite recently, two or three thousand revolutions ago I think, and probably will be over with before we know it, while I intend to go on with making and being limestone for a while longer. I cannot think of anything that will stop me but the extinction of the sun or my extinction by the little flesh beings, whose inventions are filling the ocean and the air with acids. I do not get along with acids, they dissolve me, and I go all to carbon dioxide. Gas is too restless. I would much rather be little flesh beings and shells and stone. But of course such matters are not entirely up to me.

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin was born in 1929 in Berkeley, California, and lives in Portland, Oregon. She has published twenty-one novels, eleven volumes of short stories, four collections of essays, twelve books for children, and six volumes of poetry and four of translation. She was voted into the Academy of Arts and Letters in 2017, and won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014. She has received many honors and awards including the Hugo, the Nebula, the National Book Award, and the PEN/Malamud. Her most recent publications are *Words Are My Matter*, 2017; *No Time to Spare*, 2017; *Finding My Elegy (New and Selected Poems, 1960-2010)*, 2012; and *The Unreal and the Real (Selected Short Stories)*, 2012.

PETER SCHAIBLE

Scargo Tower Sunrise little planet, 2011
99 photographic images blended
and stitched together, 12 x 12 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

PETER SCHAIBLE

Scargo Tower little planet, 2011
Multiple photographic images blended
and stitched together, 12 x 12 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

JOLIE KAYTES

Planting

Reflections about
plants and values in
a changing landscape

In an abandoned serpentine quarry, I once constructed habitat for an endangered species, a plant called *Dudleya setchellii*. *Dudleya setchellii* is endemic to the Santa Clara Valley in California and thrives in and requires the heavy metals found in serpentine soils. A dense gray-green rosette of pointed succulent leaves, *Dudleya setchellii* emerges from rock crevices. Its base might grow to be six inches wide and high, however its stalk of yellow flowers can be three times larger and its lacy network of roots can extend indefinite lengths for water. *Dudleya setchellii* is extravagant and restrained.

The *Dudleya setchellii*s I tended, were salvaged from the quarry because it was slated to become a development with houses, a golf course, and a country club. I planted the specimens in the enclosed “conservation area,” one by one, in rows, on the south faces of squat mounds, as specified by the developer’s mitigation plan. Nestled in the ground, all lined up, surrounded by fortresses of mud and rock, the *Dudleyas* looked like trodden warriors defending, but equally defeated by, this site. I hoped the transplants could endure the gush of winter rains and the dry of summer. I wondered if their new configuration—a rectilinear patch of endangered plants adjacent to fairways or water hazards—would elicit awe or engender care. The scene at the quarry saddened and stirred me. It spoke of the tensions of growth and decline, and our attempts to reconcile humans’ role in both.

Dudleya setchellii, also known as Santa Clara Valley liveforever, reproduces through seeds and by forming rosettes that become new plants. Thus, *Dudleya setchellii* can extend its life again and again and again. Periodically, I thought the planting endeavor might enable the species to sustain its namesake amid seemingly unstoppable development. I knew, however, that this optimistic logic was illogical, as the planned residential neighborhoods and golf courses covering the valley’s serpentine grasslands reduced *Dudleya setchellii*’s limited habitat and furthered its imperiled status. Even so, I reasoned that any planting was better than none, and the fact that there was a conservation planting suggested that on some level, the developer acknowledged the vitality of existing conditions.

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