

AMIT MAJMUDAR

## Invasive Species

The bees are Africanized. All elm disease is Dutch.  
The carp is Asian, the python of the Everglades  
specifically Burmese. The plague bacillus  
sailed from India to Europe. Europe coughed  
khaki back at India. Everything is alien,  
especially starthistle with its spurs and bursts,  
unearthly, mapping its home galaxy  
like a foundling with a fleur-de-lys foot tattoo.  
Though even lilies hitchhike—every ditch lily  
was once a tiger lily, treasured in the garden  
of a Mughal. Everybody thinks the Mughals  
Indian, but Mughal comes from Mongol.  
Invaders make themselves at home and home  
remakes them into natives. Everybody comes  
from someplace else where they were royal  
refugees. We flower where we flower,  
flinging roots like ropes from runaway  
hot air balloons to snag a city's skyline.  
It never feels like an invasion when  
you're doing it. It feels like parenting,  
like cooking what you've always cooked, like dancing  
with your grandma at a noisy wedding.  
But then you turn to see the horrified  
park rangers staring at you, calling in  
the experts—look at this, what do we do,  
they're everywhere. You wonder who they mean,  
but then you see. Their poison hemlock? That  
is you. Their brown tree snake. Their killer bee.

# Vocative

English is my native  
anguish. I was born here,  
read here, teased and torn here.  
Vocative, ablative,

locative, alive:  
English was a dislocation  
navigating oceans.  
Wherever it arrived,

it broke and brokered words,  
its little bits of Britain  
pilfered, bartered, written,  
looted, hoarded, heard.

Papa swapped a world  
for shiny colored beads,  
for dandelion seeds.  
We are subject verbs.

The root word of my name  
hooks a foreign land,  
long-since-shifted sand  
books cannot reclaim.

Graft of tongue, gift of dust,  
mother and stranger, sing  
the kedgereee, the everything  
at once you've made of us.