Poem: Measuring the Distance between Seattle and Texas

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(For Michael)

32,000 feet above
you'll see
Coast Salish Territory
as deep green hills
embraced by water
silver as salmon scales

From here you cannot
smell the spores of moss
that reimagine sidewalks
as lush pathways
or the decomposition
of cedar rising from
an urban forest

32,000 feet above
and I am reimagining the distance
between Seattle and Texas

If an arrow in flight
in each instant of time
is motionless then
my movement through
space at 500 miles per hour
can't be perceived and

when I unlock the door
to my brick cottage
in Tonkawa and Towakoni Territories
I remember that
physicists say
there are dimensions so small
they can't be perceived

But I know how to bend
spacetime
I know it opens
when I hold you
up through dreams
where I am flying
back to you

and I know the distance between
Seattle and Texas folds into itself
like I curl into your warm arms
collapse against your soft belly

I measure the distance between
Seattle and Texas in
the soft peach of your
earlobe
in kisses
I still feel
on my throat
still see on
my right shoulder blade

Measure the distance
between Seattle and Texas
with breath
skin
my fingers relishing
each soft brown hair on your cheek
Measure it by the sweet sting of your sweat on
the tip of my tongue
and the scent of iron
at your wrist

I will calculate the distance
between the brown and hazel
of your eyes
the space between sleep and dreams
with a two-step I sing to you
from halfway across the continent
on a hand drum painted
with sweet gale

and manroot

The distance between Seattle
and Texas is not 2,229 miles
not 3,588 kilometers
The distance between Seattle
and Texas is not far at all

When I come home to you
darling
you'll see

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Qwo-Li Driskill is a Cherokee Two-Spirit/Queer writer, scholar, and performer. S/he is the author of Walking with Ghosts: Poems, *and the co-editor with Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen of* Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature *and, with Daniel Heath Justice, Deborah Miranda, and Lisa Tatonetti, of* Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature, *a winner of the Silver Medal from the Independent Publisher Book Awards and a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award and ForeWord Book of the Year Award. Qwo-Li is Assistant Professor in the Women, Gender, & Sexuality Program at Oregon State University.*