

Justin Evans

A Place to Start

“valley enough to lose the whole
damned herd in”

---William Kloefkorn

You have to imagine first.
You have to *un-build* almost everything
then re-grow all of the trees. Let the tall
grass thrive. Make the scrub oak return;
see the valley for the first time—
how it stretched out beyond Utah Lake
lost in the haze of sunset instead
of the inversion of these modern times.

Looking 150 years into the past
is a matter of will in itself, not un-like
how settlers came to this place
seeing into the future, mapping ambition
for themselves, calling out in the winds of time.

*Acre by acre and yard by yard
the future unfolds into our lives
only to be lost in the past once again.
Those who follow cannot know
how this pasture was first cleared
for melons, grain, alfalfa---how each furrow
took its life from one of us,
how we each gave of ourselves.*

Looking across the broad valley now
hardly anything of those early days remain.
Stories of those times are only whispers
in the wind, caught up in the trees.
Can you hear their soft tatters now?

Justin Evans lives in rural Nevada with his wife and three boys, where he teaches at the local high school. In addition to three chapbooks, his first full length collection of poetry, *Town for the Trees*, was recently released from Foothills Publishing. His poetry has recently been published in *diode*, *Listenlight*, and *Scythe*.