

BEAD WORKERS BY LAURA 'DA

Needles in skilled hands
pulled through cloth or skin
move of their own

gilded volition.

Taaniwe laakwa?

In Shawnee,
you ask
where in time

as opposed to when

and it helps me

consider folds of territory

tilled by memory and capacity
where the ones I tender
bloom quietly and eternally.

A strain of heirloom corn
roughly translates to the word

sustainer—worlds

that germinate inside such a word;

wild horses, liting shadows,
glimpsed in the elbows of the hills

like opaque flags of prayer.

My distant kin in Neosho

folded deep indigo beans
into the palm of my hand

and said try them
where you stay.

Within the words of a blessing
in my husband's language

I recognize through repetition—

The word for city.

The word for garden.

Like an heirloom seed,

I was sown and cultivated
back from the brink.

To rise within

a place in time,

hands sorted
hundreds of seeds;
medicine and sustenance—

pallid disks of immunosuppressants
and steroids.
Flint corn from the Scioto Valley.

All those moments
I shook too hard

to do it myself.

Running a finger
across the slight backs
of trade beads: cornflower blue,
grassgreen, the white-heart red
a fire-flood of sunset.

I feel the shadow
of my aunt's beading
wringing my neck and wrists.

Spells to protect
my casing gates.

Cerrillos turquoise
threaded into my earlobes.

Intricate blueprints
to the homelands
kept my toes
from the sky ladder's
sapphire rungs.

Sustainers are all around:
songs chanted
seven states away—glistening
exhalations
of devotion and sacrifice,

migrations of breath.

Adorn the skin with glass.

In a place in time

the ground warms and opens—

the hour is right,

stitch a seed and it sustains.

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Author Research

Title:	Author:
Where is this author from? (Country, state, region)	
What university did this author attend and what were their areas of study?	
What is their tribe and where is that tribe located?	
What is the focus of the author's work?	
What is this tribe known for? What makes that tribe unique?	