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Sleepless

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Mariana McDonald is a poet, writer, scientist, and activist. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including poetry in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, and the *New Verse News*; fiction in *So to Speak* and *Cobalt*; and creative nonfiction in *Longridge Review* and *HerStry*. She co-authored, with Margaret Randall, *Dominga Rescues the Flag* (Two Wings Press, 2019) about Black Puerto Rican heroine Dominga de la Cruz. McDonald lives in Atlanta.

Sleepless

Hypnagogia:

Not a place,
or ancient myth,

but endless miles
of highway
the mind travels
on the road
to sleep.

The scenery
is neon clouds,
fluorescent fields,
and glowing
craters.

The jaunt was
now and then
before all this.
In coronatimes,

it's nightly.

Sometimes

I'm almost there,
at my yearned-for
destination
—blissful oblivion—

when a thought
zips by
like a pebble
on the windshield,
and I swerve awake,

suddenly
in a traffic jam
where nothing
moves,
the hours pass,

and I'm stalled
in hypnogogia
again.

Against Reopening

Brookhaven, Georgia. May 2020

Brookhaven is the city I had thought of,

small but bustling, vibrant,
young and on the way to great
adventures. Just the size

of that day's virus deaths
across the country, in the
thousands—fifty-three,

a number quite unsettling.
I argued that the virus is still
raging. Look, as many people dead

as all of your own city,
can't you see the danger?
People want to open up. I get it.

But I'll refrain from outings
for my safety, all our safety.
That was two weeks back.

Today, the numbers at John's Creek,
nearly ninety thousand people gone.
Soon it will be Macon's hundred-fifty.

How I fear the terrible road to Atlanta!

It makes me think

It makes me think
of AIDS.

The blundering, the slowness.

Denials and neglect and
ravaged bodies. Toxo in the
brain and purple lesions. Morgues
heaped with Black corpses.

It seems like that
yet different.
Omnipresent in the
stars and skies.

It makes me think
we have to rise
again, angry, fearless,
to make a better history,

to leave
better memories
for the earth.