

Dinnerview: Noah Warren

written by Danielle Susi | November 6, 2019



Noah Warren is the author of *The Complete Stories* (Copper Canyon, 2021), and *The Destroyer of the Glass* (2016), winner of the Yale Series of Younger Poets. He is a doctoral student in English at UC Berkeley and a former Wallace Stegner Fellow. His poems appear or are forthcoming in *POETRY*, *The Paris Review*, *The Southern Review*, *New England Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, *PEN America*, *ZYZZYVA*, *LARB*, *poets.org*, and elsewhere.

Here, he talks about an indulgent celebration meal, just a few almonds dissolving in his body during death, and food quirks he can't quite talk about in public.

On his all-time favorite meals:

There are two, I think, one for each antipode. The first would be the meal I had when I finished through hiking the segment of the PCT I did in 2012, from the Mexican border to Yosemite. I had lost about thirty pounds and so when my friend Addison and I staggered down to the Valley at dusk the first thing we did was make a beeline to the grocery store and food court. We each got a large pizza (mine was pepperoni) and I bought a half gallon of cookie dough ice cream to boot. Of course a normal person knew the pizza could not be *good* but after so long eating dried rice and beans and broken tortilla dabbled with tuna fish it was pure manna. The ice cream was a mistake, as I recognized by a third of the way through; nevertheless, I persisted out of a certain stubbornness in my celebration. Which had predictable consequences as I rolled slushily around trying to sleep on the dirt that night.

The other was when I was sixteen. I had been put in touch through a distant chain of acquaintanceships I didn't really understand with the latterday inheritors of an old French estate near Fontainebleau. The estate had been turned into a nature reserve, and they lived in a little eco-friendly house overlooking those canals and marshes as the sprawling manor house slowly deteriorated. But they retained that refinement that was so unknown and

attractive to me especially at that age. They were making coquelets au vin and I had never seen someone take such extravagant care with each ingredient; we were plucking the birds on the little porch. Of course they turned out exquisite, glazed and sweet with tender baby potatoes and fingerling carrots, brightened by two lemony salads, counterpointed with a paté from the surrounding forest, a blue ramekin of which lingered on the outside table where we ate, the little pot of soft, fatty earth everything else orbited. I marveled, and said I didn't have the faintest idea how to cook. Oh you will, the count said. You already know how to eat. Dusk fell, the marsh birds whistled beside the canals.

On what the light looks like during his favorite meal of the day:

Breakfast is coffee and sometimes a banana. In the bay, it's often still fogged over, so there's a sense of light in abeyance, provisional smallness; a temporary opportunity to focus on small things before the lid of the big blue pot is taken off and the sun pours down. Before the big gray wall rolls back out into the ocean.

On his writing snack:

A handful of raw almonds.

On his go-to late-night snack:

Breakfast cereal: usually a bowl of Trader Joe's Vanilla Almond Crunch.

On whether he has any food quirks:

Not that I can share here.

On his final meal request:

I love decadence, but I think I'm most at peace when I'm being ascetic. I like being hungry through the morning, for instance, because my mind feels sharp and electric, and thoughts seem consequential: writing becomes more than a pastime. I think I would want just a few almonds dissolving in my body at the end, a thin slow stream of energy. Just enough to keep my eyes and mind focused on everything that wasn't me.