



VERSE IN PLACE

PATTIANN ROGERS

Omnipresent Stories

Bones permeate our lives like lasting spirits speaking in archives, primal histories, voices from the silent skeletons of executed criminals and innocents, sacrificed infants buried alive, their bones preserved deep in the solid darkness of peat bogs. Across the earth, the bones of leaders, heroes, kings, pharaohs, chiefs, buried with their rusted crowns; their bones covered by tattered garments and tarnished riches speak to us today from their damp caverns, pyramids, majestic marble tombs.

More than merely memorials, bones are maps of ancient conflicts, records of the location where each warrior fell during the final battle, with shattered weapons, armor crushed, trampled, his fossilized bones exhumed from beneath the fields covered now with cemetery forests.

Many skeletons of sailors, traders, pirates sprawl unnamed in the starless nights of sea bottoms, hulls themselves among the board-broken hulls and crumbled eaves of sunken ships, puzzles of twisted bones, the rotted mast prone on the deck still bearing the skull and crossbones of the Jolly Roger flag, torn, ragged and ripped, covered with silt, uprooted seaweed, kelp swaying in the silence, slowly in a careless current, their stories remaining untold.

Bones tell the story of a mother's skeleton lying in opened soil, a skeletal infant lying at her side, both unearthened from their shallow grave by a flooding river along the trail, and the wagons moved on.

Ancient bones burned black, known to have been gathered by prehistoric humans a million years ago, were discovered recently by archaeologists in a deep and treacherous cave passage. Burned black for what reason? Light? warmth? a ritual? cooking? to ward off predators? The story will be revealed piece by piece as scientists carefully study the setting and the clues and the details of the bones.

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PATTIANN ROGERS has published seventeen books, most recently, *Flickering* from Penguin Random House. She holds a BA from the University of Missouri and MA from the University of Houston. Among other awards, she has a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Burroughs Medal for Lifetime Achievement in Nature Poetry, a Literary Award from the Lannan Foundation, and two NEA grants. She and her husband live in Colorado. They have two sons, three grandsons, and have been married and lived together for 62 years.



USA DHAR



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On the cover of this issue

This viewpoint of a Union soldier facing Pickett's Charge reveals a pivotal moment at Gettysburg, foreshadowing the Civil War's outcome.

GARY E. DAVIS