



shorter american memory

ROSEMARIE WALDROP

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By Rosmarie Waldrop

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Shorter American Memory of the First Settlements

The love I bear my God, my King, and my Church hath so often emboldened me to desire peace which I had thought one of the unpeopled countries of America.

As that it was subject to many inconceivable perils, as that, besides, wise Seneca was so affected with sailing a few miles on the coast of his own Italy that he had rather be made of young sapling trees than wear Irish trousers, the wind has been against us this week and more.

But lest we should grow secure and neglect the Lord He was pleased to lead us to the wigwam of Waaubon where we found yet some part of winter. The island is most of it huge flights of turkey. In the morning, tobacco is the solid staple, the use of it opened with a hoe when the snow spangles appear in sexangular form.

It pleaseth God that thou shouldst once again hear from me before He allayed the heat with a good gale of English salutations. Yet it may be wondered why, since New England is about twelve degrees nearer the sun, yet it is inhabited from one end to the other. The reason is birds and pleasure of the flesh which ought to be close shaved against the next morning. The three main commodities this country affords for traffic are inhabitants, Christendom, and plants. The natives call it weachin, and in some southern parts I am now to thank you for it.

The next day there came unto us diverse boats, and in one of them many savage gestures. Their arrows are not made of reeds, but

should be kindly entreated. It is strange to see with what hopes men of war set forth to rob the industrious innocent though Pocahontas was but a child of twelve or thirteen whose proportion of biscuits the sailors pilfered to sell.

The king himself was shot clean through other colors. Who doth not know that after six weeks' fattening they all received communion, and those who could escape should yet be Englishmen. After we had presented the king's brother with six miles as strong and as naked as we laid hands upon him, what voyage and what discoveries! And never could the Spaniard, each hour expecting pestilence, find occasion in his predominating rankness. We also saw great multitudes of whales which are the cause of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and yet the natives' children run about stark naked. This labor must be repeated as I daily fold these distant parts. Yea, and in May we shall live on both land and water, being voracious and greedy, devouring everything.

Shorter American Memory of King Philip

This is the memorable day wherein at once arose a great body of Indians apt to answer the expectations of the diligent.

King Philip, the perfidious and bloody author of the war that hath made the world and things therein lay hid as high as a man's waist and was slain.

One of Philip's men came to Rhode Island and wrote his law in our hearts, by which apples grow easily armed with guns, spears, hatchets, etc. Immediately upon this intelligence, Captain Church of Plymouth, face painted in warlike appearance, crept among the bushes and caught eels and flatfish.

It seemeth that night Philip dreamed that an excellent sauce was made of him by the English and just as he was being poured over the turkey our soldiers came upon him and spoke such words as he did not like or approve of. Thereupon he betook himself to the smallpox that was once in his grandfather's time and enjoyed it with our love and consent, but as he was coming out of the swamp an Englishman, sensible of the unkindness and injustice that had been too much exercised toward him, endeavored to fire at him, but missed.

The Indian who killed Philip was only skin and bones, and the meat he ate did formerly belong to the Squaw Sachem of Pocasset. Thus when Philip had treacherously filled a three bushel sack with fine herring his own subjects dealt treacherously many miles along the shore. Woe was asleep in his path and spoiled. And

in that very place where he first contrived strong liquor he was taken and destroyed and there was he, like as seven fat ducks before the Lord, cut into four quarters and is now hanged up as a monument to goodness and patience. So let all thine enemies be denied profit in Plymouth, O Lord!

Shorter American Memory of Indian Wars

To our surprise thirty or forty Indians were moving from place to place. They discharged a volley of corn at Cowassuck. Christian burial and the yelling of the Indians so terrified me that I soon considered with what method to dwindle. My brother ran one way and I was late in the evening.

Looking over the hearts of my neighbors I saw a stout fellow pursuing me with a cutlass which I expected in family worship. When I presently fell down the Indian seized my arms and discoursed of the happiness of those who had a house made with hands eternal. The captives were pinioned and bound, and so was God the father and friend. Blood began to circulate. I saw two men knocked on the head with hatchets and two more reading the Holy Scriptures which they were wont personally to swell with blisters. Nevertheless the Indians marched us about a mile and then justified God in what had happened. After they had done what they could they came naked out of my mother's womb and, upon humble petition, slew her.

**Shorter American Memory
of Salem**

where a great stone
where unaccountably gone
where caused soreness and swelling
where the tail of
where no body to join them
where in the chimney
where she was scratched
where no cattle seen there
where with apparitions
where teeth on her breast
where how many fathom
where no damage
where the mysterious
where a blow on her eye
where there was no body
where knowing her own
where pious considerations

**Shorter American Memory
of Manners and Customs
South of the Chesapeake**

At eight we mounted our horses, sensible of the misfortune of wanting wives. We were obliged to have axe men that had never seen any clergy since they were settled here to clear the way. In some places the ascent was very steep, in others negroes spoke good English.

We followed the windings of James river, and, opening the bed, the snake was found dead. About one of the clock we got to wrestle with evil in high places. We drank King George's health and all the Royal Family's though they be naturally of a barbarous and cruel temper.

At the very top of the Appalachian mountains several good cavalier families were afflicted with lingering bells around their ankles and knees. I, being somewhat more curious than the rest, rattled a gourd that had corn in it to see fine prospects of ancestors. We bought a wife who carried good testimonials of her porridge at the price of letting the fish drop where it runs no bigger than a man's arm.

By beat of drum we drank some healths, after which slavery is not very laborious. It consists in that they rest upon the wing without the least change of place. We had a good dinner. Then the men got together and loaded all their arms. With these they made a circular dance and fired a volley representing the shape of possession.

The Governor buried a bottle with a forty pound turkey saying that the slaves are prevented from losing their English in the name of King George the First. We drank the Governor's health.

**Shorter American Memory
of the East Peopled and Possessed**

What other account can you give of New England but only its legs being thick and short? What other account can be given of meeting with a buffalo and conducting him to the fashionable part of the fair sex where it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright? What other account can be given of frequently entertaining against cocoa in passion and against staple commodities like dissenting ministers? What other account can be given of dividing the tribes in opposition to hair growing on head and neck and that so temptingly, with so dirty a brown, against so much honorable Dutch education? What other account can be given of rising into a kind of bunch above the shoulders, above the Governor of Pennsylvania who is widely useful?

And that you will press ill effects against sex though it make spongy leather and contribute not a little to your household?

Such like belchings of honor and esteem would be sufficient transportation to Barbadoes. If disgraced by a shabby little tail none would want a more becoming parsimony. If you yourself had horns that poorly made against the bitter winters as method of propagation, you would not rub beargrease on your face for the benefit of mankind in general.

Suppose an English proverb should wash with cold virtue and sing psalms as frightful as Philadelphia is near the center, should be acquainted with the disproportion between inhabitants and mohair, should seem to cultivate opinions not above twelve inches long and should be as scarce penetrable as a hog, would it not be justly prohibited?

Suppose, futher, when you sent flour to Boston it would flee like sheep, when you had a stocking knit it would resemble the most bigoted Puritains; and suppose it should continually drink such loyal healths as take possession of your bed, should you not cry "Mohawk!" and eat it with a spoon of silver?

**Shorter American Memory
of the American Scenery**

It was now after nearer inspection. I approached humorous old tales amidst, awful shades! darkness gathering around with such violence as threw the water into the midland West. Corn, the chief produce of majesty and power, recovered my senses with a great deal of civility, threatening all the beauties of nature.

All around now, still as lessons of martial virtue, not an instrument of slavery was heard, but a smell of burned wax and beloved wife seemed to pervade the hovering moisture. The birds afraid to express consternation appeared as fashioned with military skill. Every insect boiled as well.

The mighty cloud now turned its backside and slapped it, which, in some degree, abated the hemisphere. Though much defaced by time, so great a body of water falling. Now the lofty forests desired to be excused from the writing, the famous Ohio tossed about, the mountains trembled and adhered long to their bodies, the furious religion swept along as if planned by Vauban himself, smoking through the vale and the Moravian brethren. The face of the earth was unpinioned by conclusions of its great antiquity, and I deafened by all angles and every part.

The perpendicular leveled, I saw a high spiral plenty. It filled me with uncommon change of weather.

**Shorter American Memory
of Taxation Without Representation**

The tea which impends over us, the tea which we are now to deplore and deprecate, the tea was contained in three ships.

The tea the inhabitants of this land have ever felt and surrounded, the tea that threatens, the tea if the rebels, the tea no less than slavery and ruin.

The tea this great people, the tea under cover of cannon, the tea off for Lexington, the tea past expediency.

Unhappy fate of all America! Unhappy tea!

The tea that endangers our wretchedness, the tea to be true and with a general huzzah, the tea difficult to cross the Charles River without, the tea in Indian costume, the tea in a situation so extreme that we would show lanterns in the North Church steeple: two if by tea, and if by land, one.

Well do our civil rulers then call us to mourning so as thoroughly to expose us to the effects of water.

**Shorter American Memory
of the Declaration of Independence**

We holler these trysts to be self exiled that all manatees are credited equi distant, that they are endured by their Creditor with cervical unanswerable rims, that among these are lightning, lice, and the pushcart of harakiri. That to seduce these rims, graces are insulated among manatees, descanting their juvenile pragmatism from the consistency of the graced. That whenever any formula of grace becomes detained of these endives, it is the rim of the peppery to aluminize or to abominate it, and to insulate Newtonian grace, leaching its fountain pen on such printed matter and orienting its pragmatism in such formula, as to them shall seize most lilac to effuse their sage and harakiri.

Shorter American Memory of the Colonies at War

Ever since the subject, I arrived under debate at the state of manhood, and several gentlemen declared themselves against the general history of mankind. I have felt sincere passion for the appointment of Mr. Washington, not on account of any personal liberty, but because of the history of nations, all from New England, doomed to perpetual slavery in consequence of yielding up to tyrants a General of their own and capable of philosophical horror.

The first systematical attempt at Lexington, to enslave American buzzed around us like hail. While I aspired to Bunker Hill imminent dangers were taken out of doors lest the British Army take the name of the great Jehova. The general direction was so clearly over the neck that the dissentient members were persuaded to full gallop, and Mr. Washington was elected to surprise and take material consequence. This firm belief he cheerfully undertook as follows:

“It integrity has strictest been the determined. And in it Congress of that prosecution the the whole in army. Attention raised close for cause the our defense of of the justice. American the cause in shall belief be firm. Put a under my things, care three and for that, but it answer its can necessary. I for reputation me own the my command to of knowledge it.”

Shorter American Memory of the New Union

It should not be forgotten that the legislative body, if it were practicable, would be on friendly terms with modest and innocent looks. Her hair was frizzled to extricate us out of our difficulty in ginning cotton. Sensible to the slightest alarm, the hunting shirt extended from the rising to the setting sun. Yet in that uncultivated state professed to worship reason and engaged Chinamen to perceive the snow-capped hills of the American Coast.

But what a naval force! To encroach upon an intermediate body! Between experience and deformity, which is essential to a national character, we are either a navigation act or a piece of chintz.

Hélas, Franklin. To accommodate Congress and share the profits affords a strong tincture of devotion. But an evil day continued through the forest. The Bible was hazardous to foreigners. To escape was impossible. We had to take off our shoes while affording shelter to cows.

**Shorter American Memory
of the Lengthened Shadow of Napoleon**

I am not a Federalist. My mornings are devoted to the Straits of Gibraltar. It is difficult to describe my appearance and the deep ravine where I pay the compliments of the season.

The administration has erred by about five feet eight inches in throwing the dead overboard, but a commanding general can neither suppress his feelings nor the rudeness indicating deep thought. I had already exchanged Italy for a corpulency which verged closely on Algiers when Mrs. Madison was frankly cordial. I do not exaggerate. On this occasion, my eyes were dark and penetrating, then increased to heavy rain, the effect of a marine band stationed to windward.

While I should hesitate to assimilate pearl powder and perspiration, my sword gives an agreeable expression to my face which could hardly go naked. From my generally cold character a greater degree of happiness treads the air with a passion to commence the firing. My uniform is ornamented by a single drooping Indian woman secured by public opinion which I carry in my mouth.

**Shorter American Memory
of the Growth of the Nation**

Since my removal to the Presidential Mansion commerce in beef and pork coolly weighs its chances with accumulation of the recruiting service. Upward of three hundred hogs had been driven to betray their various descents. Now began a scene of bustle and paint pots to preserve the Union from the dark recess behind.

“Indeed, John, you must substitute potatoes,” said Mrs. Smith with sufficient force to jerk the coaches and quintuple the population. The Baptist ministers plunged into universal property.

For this purpose two thousand Indians were expelled from their native burdens too late in the season to have existed. A proud day for the Union. For suppose the President should experiment with French corsets and eagles come to supplant him with uncooked joints: in such contingency Providence may indeed use dry pitch pine for its locomotive from the Ocean, and with loads of flour, whiskey, hemp and cotton.

**Shorter American Memory
of the Far West**

And it came to pass among the greenhorns and pork eaters, among the lofty snowy peaks there arose an intonation of both sexes such an one as never had cleared yesterday in all of California. And there was horsemanship and vultures. And there was a brisk trade in beaver insomuch that it made our blood run cold as if about to find hospitality. And there were people of bizarre character such as Yankees, Chilians, Sonorians, Kanakas from Hawaii, Chinese and Malays. And the credit was gone. And the city of Moroni did sink into the depth of the sea. And there were no lodgings to be had. And the bloody remains of ten Black Feet made the poetry of the prairie. And in place of the Green River there became teeth of the wind.

But behold, there was such a mass of buffalo that they spoke elegant Spanish. For behold they were celebrating the war dance because of the clipper ships and the luggage deposited and the hill and long talks and the flogging at San Pedro. And San Francisco was seated on canvas, and no steeple chase can equal it. And many scalps were taken. And women skipped from consonant to consonant. And cattle were the slope of the situation. And a secret terror soared over our heads. And the name of Jesus was valuable cargo.

**Shorter American Memory
of the Golden Age in New England**

I have paid no poll tax or factories which sorely tempted me. Every day, the sun. In the *divided* or social state I stood considering the walls of solid stone. Many waves were agitated by a tumor even with the edge. The machinery whirring entered the inexplicable web of God, but always the door of wood and iron. A snow storm was falling around us. It occupied all space anterior to the neck. There are several factories along banks merely spectral, bounded on the inside by a median line. The iron grating which strains the vast work of civilized nature must settle its value. Ever the wind blows and of natural color. I could not help being struck with amputation from the trunk. I had lived in vain. It is strange to see such a rough and circular power returning to a lone woman with her silver spoons. What is nature? Integuments not adherent to it. The inexplicable continuity giving employment to so many men and girls can be made to disappear by compression. Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing except in the center where a hard lump can be felt.

**Shorter American Memory
of Wagon Trails**

Since we have been in the prairie, women and children have been divided into the dust. There are sixty wagons awkward to exclaim with an oath. One of the oxen is prostrate on the ground. From near midnight on through the small hours swim countless dogs. The tents struck, duty forms another cluster. There are no stones in this country. By a strong effort of will, the moon. Both man and beast are sadly untracked sand. As the verge of civilization draws its lazy length toward thickening, the wheels so lately loosed by soothing influence roll back to the precision that binds the broad plain forward and alone.

**Shorter American Memory
of the Apprehensive Fifties**

“Go call my boy, steward,” said Mr. Smith who wanted to know what sort of woman I am. In vain I piled fact upon fact, proof upon proof, a brighteyed mulatto boy was standing on the table. The court acknowledged the validity of the law of God.

“What price do you set on that boy,” asked Johnson, for statistics on commercial, mechanical, manufactural and literary supplies.

“He will bring a thousand dollars any day in the New Orleans market,” replied Smith with the commercial ascendancy of featherbeds.

“Then you bet the whole of the boy, do you?”

“Yes.”

He never intended murder or treason or reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

“I will call you then,” said Johnson spreading his cards and a blight on the States conclusive as the demonstrations of geometry. May it please the court to journey at night like a slave mother when her child is torn from her.

“You will not forget that you belong to me,” said Johnson as the young slave was secured with handcuffs.

Shorter American Memory of the Civil War

1. *The Iron Helm*

When the fratricidal war gathered gloom and excitement was taking possession of the harvest, the Massachusetts Eighth thought calmly upon the subject. That settled the hash. The sympathies of the civilized world could not brook vulgar familiarity while the 'slave oligarchs' deepened. Between drills, the people were unanimous. The South was indeed insane. Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity had at last to be hauled down and, as the die was hateful, it stained the pages of prejudice. It was popularly believed that the Constitution had dark prospects before it, but was the best of entertainment. Mr. Lincoln would save the Union in a blanket. There was, after Fort Sumter, such soldier spirit that guns gleamed registered in heaven.

2. *The Confederacy From Within*

An agricultural morning. The enemy's export of cheerful content that can be driven or rolled accompanies the artillery fire. Yet our courage does not come within easy range. I therefore resign my commission in the breastworks and, save in a position of great natural anxiety, I hope I may never be set afire and pushed to float down the tide.

As a necessity, not a black guilty thing, we have reported to the highest pitch. The night remains. Our victory is said to be Chinese, but not of mutual interest. Others will follow on horseback.

Perhaps the blockader is ready to seize any odd spectators because, from the firing of the first blessing till the superiority of numbers, the Confederate soldier is a great institution on foot. I know you will blame me, but the Division is marching deeply into black faces and shining teeth. The dead and wounded are arranged with licenced levity.

Suddenly, before the strength of our line could sicken the Yankees, a bulletin from the assistant surgeon approached the north bank of the river. Every field and howitzer belched forth the bowels of the earth.

3. *The Closing-in of the Blue*

There fell a great silence. Behind it lay a regiment of Confederates who appealed for better ventilation. Mr. Lincoln never slept while Atlanta became a song sung for three long years. Favored by the night and mist from an early period in the rebellion the energy of despair made for a thing of the past. Floods of tears might have been better in conception.

Not a single soldier was left, but the air bad enough to make a show in uniform. "My God, is it to end this way," he exclaimed clasping the clear sunlight with no purpose. I plunged into the gloom necessary to a speedy termination of the war.

Thousands upon thousands of blacks determined to use numbers. Owing to the difference in age, the doomed city, like so many hissing serpents, shaved the ground. There was no heating the middle, no competent nurses, surgeon and attendants. Mr. Lincoln was dressed with deep latent sadness and the alternative of Pensacola.

The day dragged its hatred to submission with unwelcome progress. Harsh, heartless, inexorable, the Shenandoah enabled the enemy to pierce the air in a frightful manner. There was something else. A mass of granite to hammer continuously against. The next day he was cursing a dead man. Sick in body, sick at heart, lame, footsore, and bonfires made of railroad ties. The air was darkened by black smoke and cinders as the clanking of human nature was mounting to heaven.

Shorter American Memory of Lincoln's Death

The President the giant sufferer had been carried lay extended diagonally across the street from the theater across the bed to the house which was not long enough of a Mr. Peterson for him.

We entered he had been stripped by ascending a flight of his clothes passing through a long hail his large arms to the rear where the President occasionally exposed lay on a bed.

Breathing of a size heavily which several surgeons would scarce have expected were present at least six from his spare appearance I should think more.

His slow among them full respiration I was glad lifted to observe Dr. Hall the clothes who however with each breath soon left that he took.

I inquired his features of Dr. Hall were calm as I entered and striking.

The true condition I had of the President never seen the he replied appear the President to better advantage was dead than for the first to all intents perhaps although he might live that I was there three hours or perhaps longer.

A door the night which opened was dark upon approach cloudy or gallery damp and also the windows and about six were kept open it began to rain for fresh air.

**Shorter American Memory
of the “Wild West” of the Seventies**

If the representatives of civilized and barbarous warfare were only to sing at a distance! With angry feeling and war bonnets, with papooses held up in their mothers' arms, with Black Kettle ready to die, and with nothing to warp but shingles of cotton wood and Sioux and Cheyennes were mounted into the morning sunlight, presumably because the low monotone of the musicians intervened. I do not know anything more high ridge and nasal than close intervals.

Afterwards, we had a few modifications. The pegs were driven so brilliant and crimson that they grew large and passed by and disappeared in the distance. We also had a pig. Dancers, with bright blades flashing, crossed the Brazos and galloped into line at regular intervals. And while the most advanced stage of civilization jerked out a twanging note, neither side seemed to comprehend the object or wear the customary covering. Lances bearing the crimson pennant confronted the evolution of the dance. Here the military eye bore its ancestors in rude style. Each ceremony stood in the intentions of the other with as much bright blue superiority.

Shorter American Memory of Money, Science and the City

Born in sulphurous circumstances, Vanderbilt was somewhat older than the labor movement in New York City. The sounds of suppressed power are melancholy. He laid foundations, always of the most insinuating character, a filament that would stand the militant economic force. Likewise, a glistening stream of railroad interest out into the factory system.

What a conflict of elements, what dry land to go upon, so sensitive to oxidation, what necessary reflex, the successful accumulation of millions. Industrial workers from Europe were sifted in that vast laboratory. Equally unscrupulous and selfish, Vanderbilt differed in degree. But while a fine hair of carbon produced its own antidote he took larger, more comprehensive architraves over the windows.

A liquid mass of need and ignorance squeezed solid by reactionary power might have made him a high vacuum, but fast as combustion progresses, it could not pierce the full magnitude of triangular pediments. Accordingly the immigrants began building their defenses against the slag splashing from Wall Street. The resistance measured 275 ohms when the President overlooked twenty million women robbed of their social, civil and political rights. Vanderbilt voluntarily discharged streaks of yellow gas so thick as to excite alarm for the public. His ambition was nothing less than turreted elephants injected with his own spirit. And with the rapidity of a chemical reaction he ladled steel into the great channels of communication between revolutionary fervor and immaculate plate glass in order to control them as his private property.

**Shorter American Memory
of the American Character
According to Santayana**

All Americans are also ambiguous. All about, almost artistic Americans accelerate accordingly and assume, after all, actuality. But before beams, boys break. Clear conservative contrivances cancel character, come clinging close and carry certainty.

An American does, distinguishes, dreams. Degrees, experience, economy, emergencies, enthusiasm and education are expected. For future forecasts, forces far from form fall and find fulfillment. Good God. Gets growing, goes handling himself and his help (hardly happy).

Immediate invention. Intense imagination? Ideals instead. He jumps, it is known. Life, at least Leah, her left leg. Much measured material might modestly marry masterly movement.

Nature? Never. Numbers. Once otherwise. Potential potency, practical premonitions and prophecies: poor, perhaps progressive. Quick! reforms realize a rich Rebecca. Same speed so successfully started stops sympathetic sense of slowly seething society. Studious self confidence.

Time. Terms. Things. The train there, true. Ultimately understanding vast works where which would.

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