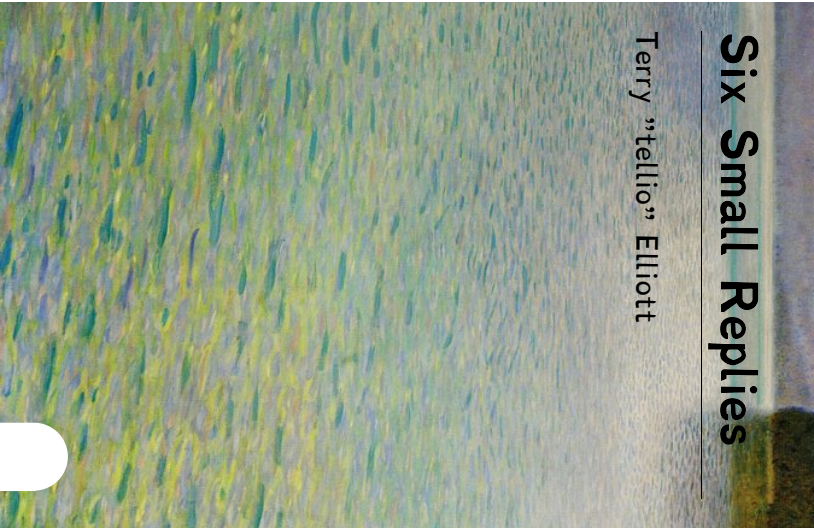




## Six Small Replies

Terry “tello” Elliott

### Off. Useless.

Off. Useless.  
(Inspired by Joy Williams’  
“Uncanny the Singing that Comes  
from Certain Husks”)  
I have an experience of my mother  
that I am trying to express  
that I know is true.  
That epistemology is true,  
but the saying of it  
is all manner of false,  
approximate.  
The doing is all wrong.  
untrued in the machinist’s sense—  
off.  
useless.

### Waving Husks Goodbye

I love these horrid hours  
where nothing is expected to  
because no one is around to  
expect it  
except the cats  
who sit on your notebook  
with muddy paws.  
And they don’t expect  
anything  
from you  
or anyone else.

Our barn collapsing  
against itself,  
our canoes crunching ashore  
on Green River gravel bars,  
our uncommonwealth rising to meet  
us.  
I, too, am part of these hills and  
their elemental rising up  
and that is good.  
This land is the way home and  
we made that path by walking it.  
This rising feels like breath falling  
This rising is peace lifting us,  
whispering us up  
rising easy like the simplest  
metaphor  
rising to the surface,  
a face through water.

### Inquiring Minds Ask, “What Does He Have to Say?”

I can feel the autumn’s first cold  
as a light shroud around my neck,  
vague and coiled and instructive.  
No one has awakened on these  
kinds of mornings  
and said to themselves,  
“I really want to hear what he  
has to say.”  
Nones.  
No ones.  
Uns.

I am in-formed and rising  
like foxfire and fireflies on our  
farm,  
reverse meteoric to the sky.  
Hope is up.  
Good is up.  
Rising is good.  
Our farm in-forms us,  
our holler farm,  
our 43.7 acres,  
our children,  
our 35 years of rising sheep.  
And every part of it has been  
hard.

### Rising Is the Simplest Metaphor

The Visit  
She was surprised.  
So were we.  
Her daddy said,  
“I have a surprise for you.”  
She looked  
and when she saw it was us  
she was disappointed.  
We were guilty  
of being  
the insufficiently  
surprising  
grandparents.

Political Poetry:  
COVID19  
COVID-19.  
The great equalizer?  
No.  
It reveals just how unequal we are.  
The middle class  
can join the viral underclass,  
one infection away  
from getting curb-stomped  
down and out.  
Where is the solidarity  
that comes from knowing  
the next virus  
might just be  
the Great Equalizer?