

## Passing Through Albuquerque

At dusk, by the irrigation ditch  
gurgling past backyards near the highway,  
locusts raise a maze of calls in cottonwoods.

A Spanish girl in a white party dress  
strolls the levee by the muddy water  
where her small sister plunks in stones.

Beyond a low adobe wall and a wrecked car  
men are pitching horseshoes in a dusty lot.  
Someone shouts as he clangs in a ringer.

Big winds buffet in ahead of a storm,  
rocking the immense trees and whipping up  
clouds of dust, wild leaves, and cottonwool.

In the moment when the locusts pause and the girl  
presses her up-fluttering dress to her bony knees  
you can hear a banjo, guitar, and fiddle

playing "The Mississippi Sawyer" inside a shack.  
Moments like that, you can love this country.

*Locusts at the Edge of Summer*, and read by Garrison Keillor , The Writers Almanac, June 10, 2016.  
[http://writersalmanac.org/poem\\_author/john-balaban/](http://writersalmanac.org/poem_author/john-balaban/)