

Poem – The Turtle

*For the Men and Women Murdered in the Emanuel African
Methodist Episcopal Church, Charleston, South Carolina*

The snapping turtle that crosses the riffles
where I fish is older than I am and descends
from prehistory with lumbering steps.
The shell on its back carries the world
while parting the waters that rush
around us. Nine people were shot
in a church while praying. So many
sacred stories about how turtle
was formed, how out of darkness
stars began to shine, the sun gathering
planets to its breast. A child must be taught
hatred and how to love a gun. This turtle
will bury her eggs in the sand, then retreat
into the river to swim toward home.
In the deepest pools, I hear the voices
of the bereaved singing.

Todd Davis, *Native Species* (USA: Michigan State University Press, 2019), 55.
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