

Hazard, Home



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Kleco, kleco to the ʕaʕuukwiiʕaḥ (Tlaoquiaht) peoples in whose territories I have composed these poems and lived so gratefully these three decades.

For those land holding, life giving miracles, the trees.

WATERS



Floating on the Surface

wings of insects: termite, ant, crane fly, dragonfly

a single crabapple leaf

tide-riding expanses of pollen

tiny white petals of shore yarrow

filament of witch's hair lichen

sunlit spotted sandpiper's feather

expired minnow, belly-up

clump of moss: from a murrelet's nest?

whole white salal flowers, round as styrofoam beads

holdfast of bull kelp trailing eelgrass blade
with pipefish hitch-hiker

bleached rib of driftwood

jaw of chum salmon

knotted skull of cedar burl.

Not the Lake

When the creek's *garbledbrook* runs clear, a listener might learn where under the sod the sodding spring springs from. Everybody assumes this is the lake's creek, it emerges from the *lake*—where else? It snakes under the bog, carves through the used-to-be-lush forest, almost suffocates in skunk cabbage quagmires before spilling over boulders, onto limpeted & barnacled shore rocks. There it heightens the cove's complexity, chills & refreshes turgid tides, provides a soundtrack for dipper & resident human. The creek blows bubbles that burst as Nootka roses. The merganser sips sweet estuarine water, tips back her crested head, makes her neck long for the quenching.

The cradled course fills up with rain & discourses more loudly. With winter's roar visitors think they hear a waterfall. Nothing so pompous. The creek doesn't lecture. In summer it withdraws from the conversation, whispers only to self & salamander. But doesn't come from the lake, is not its *offspring*: that's another stream that spits out into another bay, where no person currently lives.

I have to assume this water comes—searched for throughout this dry galaxy—from a hole in the ground. All right, *dilates from Earth's deep diaphragm*. But how deep, & how far into the forest? & why? Weeks spent bushwhacking, head low, the fevered search for source. *Why do you care so much*, someone wants to know. *You already know where it ends up. I've been washing in it*, I respond. I've soaked in its sun-heated drench. Kept my garden alive with it. *I've been drinking this water unfiltered for twenty-five years*, I exclaim.

When I was young, I sang back to it.

Dear Ocean

You used to mean food, a kayak,
harbour seals, smooth surfacing porpoises,

you used to mean beauty and risk. Now you mean home:
a floating shack held in place by polypropylene lassos,

styrofoam billets, barge-hull, cookstove-anchor and cleats.
I paddle your surface in an unpoetic craft, dented and scratched

plastic. Search for striped sun stars, Turkish towel,
devil's apron, *Laminaria*. In your intertidal zone

you coax language from me even when I'm mute as a mussel.
I am a line stretched taut; the words tug.

In my frayed lifejacket, snorkel and mask
I steal up to your cloud-sized spiral of herring,

coast gilled, finned wisdom. Flashes and sparks
dance luminescent in you on rare nights.

My house ropes slacken between chop, ripple, stillness
to a seal's gentle breathing in the dark.

In the morning the fish fly
slapping the water and me awake.

What does it mean to be awakened
by a thousand leaping fish?

It's a Party

Under shimmering wings
bees cling to anise hyssop towers,
play communally on meshes of white alyssum,
dangle from blue borage,
light up lavender, surf bee balm
and dance oregano.
Late summer they spend cooling nights
crowded to a sunflower. The rain comes.

With it, the wind. The cabin is old
and leaks. Water streams down
my bedroom window frame.
For a week it doesn't dry,
becomes a worrying stain
while the bees in the hive
in the roof above my head
fuss and buzz and build.

Turns out the streamlet is resinous to touch
and yes! sweet on the tongue.

Let them stay. Let everyone come!
Widen cracks for the bats; broaden
the barn swallows' ledge over the deck.
Boost dock flotation for that grumpy heron.
They all, all can stay.
My house oozes sticky-sweet, free honey!
I am their guest.
They were never going anywhere.

Rain Water

After days of rain the forest declaims
in fresh streams pouring out over shore rocks,
their adaptable acorn barnacles.
While other places, whole countries, crack and crumble,
somehow, here, an overabundance
in new maps of timbered tributaries
falling, flowing, flooding to the sea.
The air filled with soothing sound,
the tide and miraculous mergansers supplied
with fresh water.

Rain water.

It rests atop the saline
so they can bathe their beautiful feathers.
A system designed for them, for their benefit,
and for a planet, and for a planet's benefit.
A wren perched on swaying salal
sings its discovery of new water.

Rain water. Tasting
like the scent of trees.

Heads Up

Hail, clouds! Full of soak.
Making sun dogs, sunbows,
haloes in the cirrostratus,
rain-tailed virga, trailing jellyfish,
Van Gogh skies in daylight.
Bright fogbow reflects in still water
the eye of the mountain.
O clouds, cut the glare
with your cap and banner
astride the peak.
You carry the mist
that allows life on your planet.
We run to you for shade.
Hail, hailfall! Clouds,
let us salute you, our saviours,
our very makers.