

New Moon and Astotin Lake

Ralph D. Witten

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New Moon

Ralph D. Witten

the wrench slipped and
my thumb nail jammed
against the metal frame,
blood rose black.
everyone said
you're gonna lose that.
it hurt like hell

weeks of watching
chips from the bottom
black blood fading, and
like a pallid husk in fall
loose and dangling
it was ready to leave
and rejoin earth

but growing underneath
underneath it all
a new moon rising

clever little nail
how did you know
to heal yourself,
to remake yourself?

I should take notes

Astotin Lake

Ralph D. Witten

There was a time when smooth rocks
broke the water's surface
like the backs of small reptiles.
We worried the lake would dry up.

We've watched cormorants
wipe out spruce on an island.
It took twelve years. Then watched
aspen and birch come back.
Watched the circle dive of pelicans
feeding, and their synchronous flight
mere metres above the water.
Saw the constructions of beavers:
two-storey lodges and dams
that would make the Dutch envious.
Heard the autumn bellow
of elk (please! please!
I'm waiting in the bare trees!)
the staccato honking of geese
descending to the lake,
the sundown calls of coyotes
asking where will you be tonight?

Saw blood and splintered bone

on the snowpack trail,
tawny reeds held by black ice.
Heard the intermittent chorus
of wood frogs in the softgreen
theatre of spring,
the moon song of a loon, spirited
from its patterned throat.

There was a time to move through this world slowly
and learn rhythm.

now the lake rises against the odds
now we see the unleashed energy
behind the driving rain clouds
beneath the pounding whitecaps
we see the changes of our hands
and the mutations of our thoughts

everywhere water's rising

