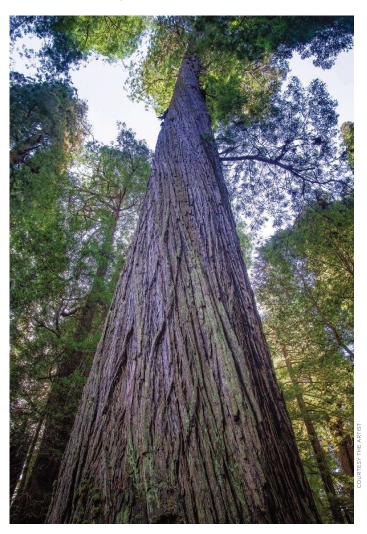
ANITA SAGASTEGUI

Reaching, 2018 Archival photographic print, 20 x 30 in



DION O'REILLY

Another Happiness

Publish your best work, find a decent job. Eat some sizzling octopus, the many kissing tentacles meaty on your tongue. Success, you think. Joy! For a while anyway, then it's another mess in the papers, the endless scroll of rapists and dead turtles, another photo of a world leader with his corn-baked face.

So you go on a car trip north to find some good rain. It's more minutes of your life ticked off by the mile markers on I-5. You get to Seattle, and the lawns are scab brown, your old home on the lake—a lime-green high-rise. Always looking for something. Answer keys. Antidepressants. More friends, another dog, another slim book of poetry where the poet keeps pushing and pushing, line after line of exquisite description, one astonished metaphor after another, escalating into an ecstatic revelation.

You can't write like that. You don't read enough Virgil and Milton, don't start your day writing lines of iambic pentameter. Detroit, Detroit, Detroit, Detroit. And you can't meditate like some of the big names do. When you sit, it feels like termites streaming in and out of your arteries. On the screen of your inner vision, all your arrogance, ecstasy, and gloom. Your crappy conversations with the bitches in Zumba Gold telling you to put a prong collar on your mutt, irrigate your nostrils, get therapy.

But admit it—sometimes in fall, you look up and see an arrowhead of duck flight, lonesome and luxurious. If only you could understand how fungus flowers from the mind of the land, how fractal arms of trees shard the sky. If only you could exalt in ash falling, the West on fire, it would be like you'd just arrived on Earth.

Dion O'Reilly's poetry manuscript Ghost Dogs was a finalist for the 2019 Catamaran Poetry Prize. She has spent much of her life on a farm in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. Her writing appears or is forthcoming in New Ohio Review, the Massachusetts Review, New Letters, Sugar House Review, Rattle, The Sun, Spillway, Bellingham Review, Atlanta Review, SWWIM, and many other journals and anthologies.