

## WAYNE THIEBAUD

*Green River Lands*, 1998  
oil on canvas, 72 x 48 in.



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## BRYNN SAITO

### The Exile

If you are the country  
then I am a prisoner  
cast into exile

making my way  
to our shore home in dreams  
then waking in the north

where stone drives me mad.  
Now the world is a free thing:  
formless and stark.

Tin cans everywhere.  
Rain filling the tin then  
spilling over.

There are no names  
for this—  
the charge of a river

flooding the embers  
shaking free roots  
of the oldest trees.

Today my grief turned  
to a dream—a desire for home.  
The desire filled me.

The dream itself  
was its own kind of paradise—  
false but perfect

bearing the details  
of our wild life, the spectral lines  
of a world wrung dry.

I could have waded forever  
in the familiar dark  
but I chose flight—

or succumbed to its leanness—  
and left you in the river.  
Then I leapt into lightning.

**Brynn Saito** is the author of *The Palace of Contemplating Departure*, winner of the Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award and forthcoming from Red Hen Press in March 2013. Her poetry has been anthologized by Helen Vendler and Ishmael Reed; it has also appeared in *Ninth Letter*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Pleiades* and *Drunken Boat*. Visit her at [www.brynn-saito.com](http://www.brynn-saito.com).