

HOW TO STOP THE BLEEDING

By Patricia Killelea

Separate me into what's real and what's spoken,
and I'll show you the ocean sprouting up between the two.

Each morning, you arrive at the doorstep of my voice
and turn away before knocking, so no one ever answers.

I am trying to explain the doorstep and the seashells I set aside
after failing to find a song for the tidepools after Fukushima.

You remind me that shells are made of keratin, just like hair & nails
and suddenly I'm inadequate for not taking the form of a spiral.

Somewhere I am finding a rhyme scheme outside of tides and sound,
based instead on the color of a leaf about to change into autumn.

I have been searching my whole life for moments that step away
from brightness, and I'm getting closer every day.

Twice in that searching I've come across a dead bird in the sand,
and I didn't know if I should say *hello* or *goodbye*.

I keep setting my own body down inside that same question
of language, but I still don't know how to stop the bleeding.

MAPPING THE MOTHLIGHT

By Patricia Killelea

I knew you by the way you came to me with knives,
eyes lowered from a life spent crouching in the bonefield.

But you've carried, too, the voices of animals, so I stop
to listen: I can hear you scattering their cries like breadcrumbs,
a path to find your way back to a world that isn't burning.

Tonight we will gather up all of our history and roll it out like dough.
Once all of our stories are flattened, the dust will settle around your tongue,
making it impossible to explain the stillness at the center of a flake of snow.

Tell me where my mouth is because my body can't remember.
I must have left it down past the creek where the wilderness moves
across the gray stones, where we walked from one sun to the next.

I've dressed up all of my words like an altar in the season of dying,
and now if I were to name the darkness, I would run out of voice.

Whenever I sleep beside you, I dream of moths giving their wings
away to the flame; tell me is it normal to believe in prophecy & the ghost of it all,

is it worth it to rise each morning to count the pine needles and the blame.
Tell me if I am the wing or if I am the fire and why I should ever believe you.

Patricia Killelea is a Chicana poet originally from California, who now lives in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where she is Assistant Professor of English at Northern Michigan University. She teaches poetry in their MFA program and courses in Native American Literature. She holds a PhD in Native American Studies and an MA in Creative Writing from the University of California at Davis. She is also the poetry editor at the lit journal *Passages North* and the reviews editor for the journal *As/Us: A Space for Women of the World*. Her poems have previously been published in *Quarterly West*, *The Common*, *Waxwing*, *As/Us*, *Spiritus*, and others.