

SHALAN JOUDRY

RAISING FORESTS

we are not the first generation to lose forests
as trees were slain for ships and forts
l'nu hunters were refused entry to their territory
fracturing livelihoods and continuity

in this landscape there have been many ends of the world
as one knows it
parents mourned children at the edges of cliffs
guardians became chained to bottles

to know the stories
as story carriers do
is to constantly taste scars where the wounds
had long punctured through

people already devastated by massacres of forests
each new generation's lost battle to save trees
too many centuries of someone's world in pieces

let's tend to the forests like prophets
encourage them to wilder in old growth
and watch them mature into being

REGROWING

after a great devastation
when the land is singing itself back
it is sometimes the unfortunate fate of the red spruce
to know two worlds

having been born into a system
when white birches and aspens blanket
where it had been broken or burned
an orchestra of sprouting and falling
competing for light
but they held together underground
everything was known
had its place

those red spruce who survived
dropped branches
 reached up
grew harder
everything became renamed
re-spaced among the hemlocks and us still redding

how my father will tell stories of those days
when being Mi'kmaw was a dreaded fate
now everything's grown damp
new scents to tell the weather by
who's reaching for the light, daughter?
we don't mind the shade now, father
though i know how he laboured for light
when there wasn't any room

it is sometimes the unfortunate fate of the red spruce
to have grown up in a known land
cycled through to something else

FABRIC OF THE LAND

this land was plotted long ago
 Mi'kmaq who saw it full of cuisine and equipment
 who knew each vein of flowing water
 kept trails for over 250 generations
 then why now is it called "wild"
 who wild-ed it?
 how can something known become unknown?

my brothers or sisters are familiar
 jovial with the land
 i've seen them kiss on occasion
 but most do not know each other like old lovers
 mapped out so comfortable to stop navigating
 no not like that
 for the land is full of ghosts and secrecy
 dark distances and traumatized rocks

but at least they know the fabric of the land
 the way the roots come up after a hurricane
 the textures of bedrock
 when clearing land for community buildings
 a new gas bar for economy
 a school sized up for autonomy
 a house for someone who has waited
 their share of poverty

my young brothers decipher
 which acres to hack for firewood
 which tracks and when to call up animal love songs
 wait in the woods in camouflage coats
 or in the motorboats to catch lobster
 to feed our children real food
 keep the sea fresh on your tongues
even if it's not a porpoise hunt
it is still a hunt

at least they are learning the fabric of the land
 its coat bristled and pitiless