

Crave

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NY
Q Books™

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.
New York, New York

NYQ Books™ is an imprint of The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.
P. O. Box 2015
Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10113

www.nyq.org

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First Edition

Set in New Baskerville

Layout by Macaulay Glynn

Cover Photograph by Carien Schippers | www.imagequine.com

Author Photo by Stephen Herz

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016930015

ISBN: 978-1-63045-020-5

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Sockanosset

My mother used to insist that living
next door to the penitentiary
and state reform schools was a good
thing, reasoning that escapees' first priority
would be distance between themselves
and the confines they'd left behind.
That's the story she would try to sell
us kids but we knew better, knew
about the boys who'd ducked from the shower line
at Sockanosset, slipped newborn and naked
out of sight of the guards, freedom
came that naturally to them.
When the clothes went missing
from a neighbor's line we realized the boys
were not cold, or suddenly shy but
crafty, looking to blend back in
with those of us who didn't yet appreciate
the true worth of one's own skin
and what it can cost to own it.

Accident

I too have confused what was just
beginning with what had already reached
its end.

Why should you acknowledge the innocence
of trees, the patience that looks now to your
family

like waiting, menace even, but is only these trees'
unthought unfolding? Here between the sinuous
bellow

of the river bend and the road that loops beside it,
has looped beside it all the years of your life, well
before

your life began, the persistent serenity of oak, maple,
pine does not anticipate what they have no capacity
to resist:

you flown free from the crumbling carapace of what had
been your car, released finally into those trees' irrevocable
embrace.

Time is a Horse

On the bus in Wales I happen
to be the one traveling through
on holiday, not the one in the midst
of her shopping, his business deal, the woman
staring steadfastly out the window, on her way
to the oncologist. Today, I am not the one
dying, though time is a horse, a runaway
none of us can dismount and so
the need is to find a way to enjoy the wind
that snatches handfuls of your hair as you race,
the horse's mane, your mane, the rhythm
and energy of the haunches powering under you,
their easy determination
to go on running.

Anniversary

for my father

Jews call it *yarhtzeit*,
the Bangladeshi *shraadh*.
Intent as we are with
getting over, getting on,
Americans have no term.

October again, and the trees
make such a pageantry of loss:
orpiment, vermilion, cadmium leaves
quiver in the steel wind
that bites them free.

In the long remembering of trees
you are nearly there
where you are not, and have not
been some nine years now.

I am at home here
in the cascade
of their radiant perishing.