

## Naturalization, From *Rough Landing*

1.

At first, I thought:  
no captain, no clouds, no shade ever again,  
the lights in the sky never solitary  
and no silence

at dawn and dusk, at night,  
the wind scraping away rock and  
the air so filled with dust  
I wanted to take no full breaths  
I took in shallow swells of air  
but still the dust filled me,

the noise filled me  
I had nothing to muffle  
my own feet scuffing  
kilometers of gravel, stone, sand  
my ears flooded  
I was a leaky boat  
I sank under my own footsteps

2.

I drifted  
I wasted water, wasted salt  
whatever the wind blew onto me  
stuck where it landed  
and at night I'd taste  
the dirt, the grit on my tongue and

it was bitter,  
those foreign minerals,  
those alien salts  
I retched, heaved out nothing  
I waited for fever,  
I wanted inflammation, expulsion  
but this landscape is patience, persistence

it erodes, it overwhelms, it outlasts  
and in the end I didn't want to be outlasted  
I didn't want all of us to die

I made a decision  
I swallowed what I had to  
each morning I stood up, chose a direction  
swallowed more

3.

the generators can only work  
with the matter at hand  
and at hand, this:  
dust, old rocks, new ash,  
air pulled through our lungs, exhaled

built into sugars, amino acids,  
essential vitamins, minerals biologically available  
so nothing gone to waste

we needed strong bones, good teeth,  
and water--  
that's how this world made it past my lips  
and into every thirsty vessel  
and bathed every shriveling cell

4.  
it was reconstruction--  
being fed, being watered  
but I wanted moderation  
I wanted to declare a historic heritage zone  
and how irrational was that?

I had spent how many years in space?  
how much time in suspension  
and how many years awake?  
by now nothing in me was from back home  
not my liver, not my stomach lining  
not the inside of my cheek or  
the skin of my lips, fingers, knees

but maybe my hair at the very ends,  
the final millimeters dry and splitting in the heat  
and already breaking  
my last bits of earth  
falling from me in long strands  
and carried away, buried

5.  
of course I wore down,  
replaced cell by cell, renovated for  
this place and its empty plateaus,  
its ancient alluvial fans splayed at the feet of  
toothy mountains, boulders glinting with mica  
its ghostly chalk plains and impressions of vanished seas  
its abyssal canyon winding around towers of wind-twisted  
sandstone, striated, silhouetted in the glare  
softened by complicated sunsets,  
by the reflected light of five moons

6.

this is the only moonlight you've ever known,  
the only sunsets  
your shadows never lonely,  
your sky never clouded,  
always thirsty, and

you've resisted, have struggled  
but you aren't resisting what I resisted

7.

I want to take a full breath,  
be filled, exhale  
drink enough,  
waste nothing,

sit with you in a small bedroom  
in front of a small window and  
wait for the last sun to go down,  
the first moon to come up