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My writing interrogates notions of attachment and impermanence. Whether referencing the topography of the land or the contours of the body, my work emphasizes how everything is subject to disintegration. It unpacks my personal compulsion to relive past experiences and emotions, interweaving interior spaces—including those of perception, reflection, grief, and desire—with a diverse range of external inspirations.

Deriving from a deep curiosity and reverence for the natural world, inquiries into astronomy, geology, landscape, and the senses permeate my work. As an interdisciplinary writer, inquiries into form also deeply motivate my practice. I will often begin to pursue a topic in a traditional nonfiction essay, but will later continue to explore similar themes in more experimental poetic forms. Regardless of genre, my writing seeks to find an ear for rhythms of language and syntax, leaning into a space where sound can create texture and even meaning. In this way I often engage both sonic repetition and thematic refrain as attempts to recover the past—but the function of memory grows obscure when we see that almost nothing lasts.

Since completing my residency at Montello Foundation, I have been struck by the powerful effect that my time amidst the remote, high desert landscape has had on my writing practice. Of course the cabin is a functional and very necessary shelter from the harsh desert environment. But it takes just one glance at the panorama presented through the studio windows to see that the space is also a lens—a frame. So often when I write I find myself lamenting how the work is 'hard'—those of us who make art pit ourselves against our expectations and our egos; we seek beauty and transformation and, too often, perfection. In this way artmaking can be arduous. But to be able to write at that desk, with those views, offered me—very literally—perspective. I could see the patterns of the natural world playing themselves out each day—the enduring mountain a backdrop to the cycles of the birds and the insects and the flowers and plants that fed one another to survive—a struggle from which I was, within the cabin walls, just barely held exempt.

And I left the residency feeling very deeply that the desk is not a place to suffer—that making art is an act through which we can process pain or difficulty without being a source of it. For my two weeks at Montello I was able to breathe; I stopped struggling to write something perfect. This helped me to remember that inspiration feels like pure excitement—that it is pleasurable—that art exists for our enjoyment and our learning and I am grateful for it.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

Think of a river as something that
comes and goes, fickle as a mineral vein

run dry. Everyone here knows
how the land shifts, its ridges rising

quick as a town that boomed
and then busted. They'll tell you everything

decays with time, even the radioactive.
So in a million years, when there is no language

left for what we've made, mined, and hidden,
I hope for the desert's half-life to bloom

into uncertain greenery, into flowers
that fade toward an ocean beyond this

bitter antecedent. But for now, the water
will remain a wish called in the name

of every town from here to California,
in these wide plains—their empty basins

held in prayer, their energy surrendered
somewhere deep in the Test Range,

in the precious metal fields,
in every person who has come this close

to nothing, not to live but to die
in double-wides and dusty bars, or

on Friday nights at the Lion's Club supper,
where an old woman might rise every so often

to feed the jukebox and dance alone.
There is no way to put ourselves back

together, cracked as the claypan, as the
honeycomb caliche, as the night sky cleft

with lights we cannot know—the atoms of the air
like mizpah coins splitting over and over.