

The Basket of Apples by Kelly Houle
after Cézanne

If there were snakes that day they let us be, in peace
to wade the sea of meadow grass and fern.
We found the orchard creekside, overgrown,
the old church rotting and one by one the apples.
Seedlings sprouting from the dung of mule deer,
a narrow path mapping the sweetest fruit.
We didn't plan it, didn't ask to be born on this tilted plane,
for river shadows pulling everything we love from the sky.
The lower branches already cleaned, I pointed, shielding my eyes
as you climbed the rustling fabric of the leaves, toward the perfect
Blue Pearmain, and when it gave, leaves and all, a dozen more
rained down, screeching kestrels in the cottonwood.
Our laughter playing off the marble cliffs
became the sound of water, the colors of the trees.