

Song of Red Bear Mantra

my ancestors
mapped these mountains
these sea currents
these forest trails

not on paper
but with their feet
with their hands pressed
to the tree trunks

their breaths singing
up the same wind
that sings me down
this canyon path

where bears wander
and lions prowl:
their fear is mine
their joy is mine

my nostrils itch
with campfire smoke
whose black ghosts stain
desert alcoves

in whose shelter
I never sat
but whose stories
sustain my blood

I am echo
I am mirror
I am daughter
I am mother

I remember
what souls forgot
but cells held tight:
record-keepers

ever faithful:
I follow tracks
by the river
fossilized mud

chronicling
bear and woman
woman and bear
how ends begin

wrestle with me
bear or angel
I will lay down
my bones for you

and be remade
as I once was
a creator
beautifully wrought

Cassondra Windwalker