

Hilary Sallick – Two Poems

Off Route 2

I found a trail between a river
and a highway.

Thorns snagged me
as I pushed my way in,

mud beneath my boots,
ice sheer in quiet corners,

hepatica's low flat leaves
open in the chill.

I saw slender stumps
sharpened to points—beaver

somewhere in its den.
I listened for what I didn't know.

Then I saw the tent,
ragged orange dome in the woods,

forbidden hidden human survival.
I gave that place wide berth.

At the Shoreline

Last night we knelt on a
seaweed-covered rock and shined
the flashlight into the water.

The moon was setting,
its bright path on the
shallow outgoing tide
a scrawl of texture.

We wanted to see
what that was, what creatures
feeding and swimming,
what conjugation—
or was it just the way
the light itself interacted
with the water's surface?

The yellowy beam
in the gray-green water
opened clear colors.
We began to see multiple
transparent fish, finless, each
an inch or two long, darting,
identical, a narrow vein within,
an eye on either side
of one end, and a single minnow, larger,
leisurely in its wanderings,
waving graceful fins,
and crabs, first a small green one,
then an orange, then a white
with pink speckles,
half-swimming, half-scrambling.
Were they playing a game
with each other? With that
fish? Were they doing something
essential, some act of survival?

And why were we
kneeling there on that seaweed,
our eyes moving from moon and stars
to their bright reflections
on the bay,
to under that water,
within that water,
to the mud, the squirt up
of cloudy silt repeating now and then
in the beam of the flashlight
as the tide continued
its trickling flow?

Hilary Sallick is the author of *Winter Roses* (Finishing Line Press, 2017) and *Asking the Form* (forthcoming from Cervena Barva Press). Her poems have appeared recently in *Ibbetson Street*, *Inflectionist Review*, *Hawk and Whippoorwill* and other publications. She is an adult basic education teacher in Somerville and vice-president of the New England Poetry Club.