



2015 Lois Prize Winner

Atlantic

The broken places shape a voice  
waves moving back and forth against the groyne  
cornerstone against erosion that itself keeps eroding  
voice is the broken place

in the water, where it divides.  
So also my father carried us, early one morning

two hundred miles east to the Atlantic  
in the raw red car that barely lasted,

a piece of the sun  
driving toward the sun.

We got to the islands where no one waited  
men in their boats vanishing down the azimuth horizon.

I will go out  
in my boat of language

because voice is not only a wound  
but also a craft.

He forgot his daughters, and moved inland, carrying his box of papers.  
We gradually burned. Being palest I got it worst

sunlight moving into the open of my skin.

The burned place

opens the story,  
violent immersion.

The damages of that curve of Atlantic are fabled  
graveyard where ships went down,

and men buried their plunder.  
I thought my father was a pirate

and search all my life for what he took. I want it back.  
Back and forth against the groyne

ocean wearing down the sea-walls.  
Unfolding sun, I took in my skin

and kept it—for the damage  
of illumination, wound

of voice. And fishermen drop their lines in at the pier  
ghost of road, arrow, weir

the final slip of shelf  
before water takes over.

My sister turned back  
but I walked to the edge, ocean's couloir

my shadow pulling down into depth.  
All the ride home, I shook, freezing cold from the burn

of skin, at the edge of third degree.  
The sun traces bodies

into names  
searing in the story.

Mother wrapped me in a sheet wet with cold water  
to hush the burn, all night I listened

as rain drove through the willows  
holding close to the verge.

Claire Millikin

**Claire Millikin** is the author of the poetry collections *Motels Where We Lived* (2014) and *After Houses: Poetry for the Homeless* (2014). Her forthcoming collections are *Television* (Unicorn Press) and *Tartessos and Other Cities* (2Leaf Press). She teaches for the program in Art History at the University of Virginia.