

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	xv
Wilderness of Flesh <i>Tory Adkisson</i>	3
What Use Is Knowing Anything If No One Is Around <i>Kaveh Akbar</i>	4
The River's Address <i>Kazim Ali</i>	5
Taking a Visitor to See the Ruins <i>Paula Gunn Allen</i>	6
A Vegetarian Goes to H Mart <i>Ally Ang</i>	8
Enskymment <i>Antler</i>	9
Encountering the Medusa <i>Gloria Anzaldúa</i>	10
Atrophied Prescript: <i>Aaron Apps</i>	12
Asleep You Become a Continent <i>Francisco Aragón</i>	13
Farmer's Almanac <i>Brent Armendinger</i>	14
Godzilla's Lament <i>Jubi Arriola-Headley</i>	15
Late Echo <i>John Ashbery</i>	16
We're Standing on the Sun <i>Derrick Austin</i>	17
Let me be a lamb in a world that wants my lion <i>Ruth Awad</i>	18
The Little Girl Is Busy Asking Questions about Desire <i>Cameron Awkward-Rich</i>	20
Inventory <i>Rick Barot</i>	21
The Dyke with No Name Thinks about Landscape <i>Judith Barrington</i>	22
Ground State <i>Samiya Bashir</i>	29
Kissing after Illness <i>Ellen Bass</i>	30
Prairie Dogs <i>Robin Becker</i>	31
Poet Wrestling with Why the Heart Feels So Bad <i>Rosebud Ben-Oni</i>	32
Outing, Iowa <i>Oliver Baez Bendorf</i>	36
Pastoral for Effective Teaching <i>Lillian-Yvonne Bertram</i>	37
Creatures of Hurt and Heal <i>Tamiko Beyer</i>	38
Song for the Rainy Season <i>Elizabeth Bishop</i>	40
Break Me to Prove I Am Unbroken <i>Sophie Cabot Black</i>	42
Burning in the Rain <i>Richard Blanco</i>	43
Swimming Hole <i>Sam Bonosevich</i>	44

Regarding the Absent Heat of Your Skin on Letters I Receive While at Sea <i>Elizabeth Bradfield</i>	45
Unruly <i>Jari Bradley</i>	46
in the cut <i>Julian Talamantez Brolaski</i>	47
Fast <i>Olga Broumas</i>	48
Lion <i>Jericho Brown</i>	50
Self-Portrait as Land Snail <i>Nickole Brown</i>	51
Hurricane Lyric <i>Matthew Burgess</i>	53
Home <i>Tara Shea Burke</i>	54
Hermit Crab <i>Stephanie Burt</i>	55
For the Feral Splendor That Remains <i>CAConrad</i>	56
Who Holds the Stag's Head Gets to Speak <i>Gabrielle Calvocoressi</i>	57
What I Would Give <i>Rafael Campo</i>	58
On Harvesting Oneself <i>Kayleb Rae Candrilli</i>	59
The Hummingbird <i>Cyrus Cassells</i>	60
Drown <i>Marcelo Hernandez Castillo</i>	61
Lesson of Bread <i>Jerah Chadwick</i>	62
Post Op <i>Judith Chalmer</i>	63
XXIV. <i>Jos Charles</i>	64
Elegy to Be Exhaled at Dusk <i>Chen Chen</i>	65
Dear O <i>Ching-In Chen</i>	67
Magnified <i>Justin Chin</i>	68
Wildlife <i>Franny Choi</i>	70
Desire as Blue Fog <i>Chrystos</i>	72
Twin Cities <i>James Cihlar</i>	73
[this the forest] <i>Cody-Rose Clevidence</i>	75
The Rock <i>Henri Cole</i>	76
Welcome to the Fall <i>Flower Conroy</i>	77
(An Orchid) <i>S. Brook Corfman</i>	78
To a Straight Man <i>Eduardo C. Corral</i>	79
Voyages <i>Hart Crane</i>	81
First Date, Hawk Mountain <i>James Crews</i>	87

Youth Sings a Song of Rosebud <i>Countee Cullen</i>	88
Once All the Hounds Had Been Called Home <i>Meg Day</i>	89
The Art of Butterflying <i>tatiana de la tierra</i>	90
These Hands, If Not Gods <i>Natalie Diaz</i>	91
Post-Therapy Room <i>William Dickey</i>	93
Could I but ride indefinite <i>Emily Dickinson</i>	94
Wood and Rain <i>Melvin Dixon</i>	95
The Basilisk <i>Lynn Domina</i>	96
Deep Lane <i>Mark Doty</i>	97
Going Home <i>Qwo-Li Driskill</i>	98
Conception Myth <i>Cheryl Dumesnil</i>	101
Sonnet <i>Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson</i>	102
Often I Am Permitted to Return to a Meadow <i>Robert Duncan</i>	103
Pervert <i>Julie R. Enszer</i>	104
Settling In <i>Jenny Factor</i>	107
Sex <i>Nikky Finney</i>	108
once a marine biologist told me octopuses have three hearts <i>Denice Frohman</i>	111
Ode to the Corpse Flower <i>Benjamin Garcia</i>	112
In Transit <i>R. J. Gibson</i>	114
Poem in Which I Transition into Water <i>aeon ginsberg</i>	115
Sunflower Sutra <i>Allen Ginsberg</i>	116
All at Sea <i>Sarah Giragosian</i>	118
pedicles, or this is where <i>Matty Layne Glasgow</i>	120
The Strangers Who Find Me in the Woods <i>Rigoberto González</i>	121
You Form <i>Rae Gouirand</i>	122
A Migration <i>Jan-Henry Gray</i>	124
Heaven and Earth <i>Miriam Bird Greenberg</i>	125
A Kingdom of Longing <i>Rachel Eliza Griffiths</i>	127
El Beso <i>Angelina Weld Grimké</i>	128
Not Children <i>Benjamin S. Grossberg</i>	129
Words for Some Ash <i>Thom Gunn</i>	130

Queerodactyl <i>Roy G. Guzmán</i>	131
Sheltered Garden <i>H. D.</i>	132
Nearly a Valediction <i>Marilyn Hacker</i>	134
The Valley of the Amazons <i>Eloise Klein Healy</i>	136
The Kiss <i>Christopher Hennessy</i>	137
Bottle Gentian <i>KateLynn Hibbard</i>	139
Shadows, Saddle Canyon <i>Jane Hilberry</i>	141
Grafted <i>Matthew Hittinger</i>	142
Idyll <i>Richie Hofmann</i>	143
Demand <i>Langston Hughes</i>	144
Tenor <i>Luther Hughes</i>	145
Elementary Departures <i>Christina Hutchins</i>	148
Primer <i>Jessica Jacobs</i>	149
A Stranger Asks Where I Am From <i>Charles Jensen</i>	150
Mesquites <i>Joe Jiménez</i>	151
Late Bloom <i>Jenny Johnson</i>	154
To a Strayed Cat <i>Stephen Jonas</i>	156
Golden Egg <i>Ever Jones</i>	157
Drag <i>Saeed Jones</i>	159
Letter to the Local Police <i>June Jordan</i>	160
purple <i>Brittney Black Rose Kapri</i>	162
Love Poem: Chimera <i>Donika Kelly</i>	163
Young Male <i>Maurice Kenny</i>	164
Conservation & Rehabilitation <i>Alyse Knorr</i>	166
Sweet Briar <i>Melissa Kwasny</i>	167
A Little Bit of Ocean <i>Joy Ladin</i>	168
Perianth <i>Gerrit Lansing</i>	169
Breathing You In <i>Joan Larkin</i>	171
Self-Portrait with Scoliosis (II) <i>Travis Chi Wing Lau</i>	172
A Southern Wind <i>Rickey Laurentiis</i>	173
Amphibians <i>Joseph O. Legaspi</i>	174

Love Two Times <i>Muriel Leung</i>	176
Thunder Cake <i>Mel Michelle Lewis</i>	177
I Came <i>Timothy Liu</i>	179
poem to my boyfriend's human immunodeficiency virus <i>Chip Livingston</i>	180
Coal <i>Audre Lorde</i>	182
Falling, Falling, Then Rain, Then Snow <i>Su Smallen Love</i>	183
Grotesque <i>Amy Lowell</i>	184
Viscous <i>Ed Madden</i>	185
Dove Season <i>Michael Martella</i>	186
[Dear one, the sea . . .] <i>Dawn Lundy Martin</i>	187
The Way the World Comes Back <i>Janet McAdams</i>	188
My Sideshow <i>J. D. McClatchy</i>	189
Coming Out in the Ozarks <i>Anne Haven McDonnell</i>	191
I Know My Soul <i>Claude McKay</i>	192
Dear Canaries <i>Kevin McLellan</i>	193
América <i>Sarah María Medina</i>	194
For Two Lovers in the Year 2075 in the Canadian Woods <i>William Meredith</i>	197
The Lovers <i>James Merrill</i>	198
Sonnet XI <i>Edna St. Vincent Millay</i>	199
Eating a Mountain <i>Deborah Miranda</i>	200
Hemispheres <i>Susanna J. Mishler</i>	201
The Complete Tracker <i>Rajiv Mohabir</i>	203
Shared Plight <i>Kamilah Aisha Moon</i>	204
Real Curvature <i>Rachel Moritz</i>	206
Hawk like a Steeple <i>Alicia Mountain</i>	207
He Says, Oyster <i>Miguel Murphy</i>	208
[I always put my pussy] <i>Eileen Myles</i>	210
For the Era of Extraordinary Weather <i>Jim Nawrocki</i>	212
Changeling <i>Hieu Minh Nguyen</i>	214
On Trans <i>Miller Oberman</i>	215
To You <i>Frank O'Hara</i>	217

Wild Geese <i>Mary Oliver</i>	218
Three times on the trail, I looked back for you <i>Kate Partridge</i>	219
Toward <i>Juliet Patterson</i>	220
Thrush <i>Gerry Gomez Pearlberg</i>	221
Radiance versus Ordinary Light <i>Carl Phillips</i>	223
Nature Poem with a Compulsive Attraction to the Shark <i>Xan Phillips</i>	224
[This white guy asks do I feel more connected to nature] <i>Tommy Pico</i>	226
Migration <i>Carol Potter</i>	227
Landscape with Lymphatic System, System of Rivulets, System of Rivers <i>D. A. Powell</i>	228
Burning Water <i>Minnie Bruce Pratt</i>	230
Lost Season <i>Alison Prine</i>	232
Livestock <i>Khalisa Rae</i>	233
Backyard Rock <i>Jacques J. Rancourt</i>	234
Gerard Manley Hopkins Drafts the Light <i>Varun Ravindran</i>	238
Head of the Gorgon <i>Justin Phillip Reed</i>	240
uncoil <i>Rita Mae Reese</i>	241
Horses in Snow <i>William Reichard</i>	242
Memory as Missionary Position <i>No'u Revilla</i>	243
heart of the bell <i>heidi andrea restrepo rhodes</i>	245
Diving into the Wreck <i>Adrienne Rich</i>	247
Backflash: Hinge <i>Elizabeth Lindsey Rogers</i>	250
Hero Worship <i>Dakota R. Rottino-Garilli</i>	252
How a Thought Thinks <i>Kay Ryan</i>	253
Fairy Tale <i>sam sax</i>	254
Await <i>James Schuyler</i>	255
Many Things Are True <i>Ruth L. Schwartz</i>	257
Woman Circling Lake <i>Maureen Seaton</i>	258
Unbearable White <i>Charif Shanahan</i>	259
I'm Over the Moon <i>Brenda Shaughnessy</i>	260
Geology of Water <i>Reginald Shepherd</i>	262
Boy with Flowers <i>Ely Shipley</i>	265

November 19, 2016 <i>Cedar Sigo</i>	267
Lovesong of the Square Root of Negative One <i>Richard Siken</i>	269
Love Letter to a Dead Body <i>Jake Skeets</i>	270
What's Required <i>Aaron Smith</i>	271
alternate names for black boys <i>Danez Smith</i>	272
Closing the Gay Bar outside Gas City <i>Bruce Snider</i>	273
Queer Earth <i>Jess X. Snow</i>	274
The Joshua Tree // Submits Her Name Change <i>Christopher Soto</i>	277
For Mac <i>Jack Spicer</i>	278
Lifting Belly (II) <i>Gertrude Stein</i>	279
Tonawanda Swamps <i>James Thomas Stevens</i>	280
Visiting the Natural History Museum with the Son I Don't Yet Have <i>Will Stockton</i>	281
The Exchange <i>May Swenson</i>	283
Estuary <i>Lehua M. Taitano</i>	284
Little Errand <i>Brian Teare</i>	285
Field Song <i>Amber Flora Thomas</i>	288
The War with the Dandelions <i>Bradford Tice</i>	289
Garden <i>Eric Tran</i>	290
the aftermath of what <i>Arianne True</i>	292
Beast Meridian <i>Vanessa Angélica Villarreal</i>	293
Instructions for Opening up the Heart <i>Irene Villaseñor</i>	294
Torso of Air <i>Ocean Vuong</i>	295
Butch Geography <i>Stacey Waite</i>	296
A Natural History of Gay Love <i>Michael Walsh</i>	298
The Third Measure Paused & Set to Your Breathing <i>Michael Wasson</i>	299
Iowa <i>Valerie Wetlaufer</i>	301
Tail <i>Arisa White</i>	302
Skin Movers <i>James L. White</i>	303
Parable <i>Jim Whiteside</i>	304
This Compost <i>Walt Whitman</i>	305
Juneberry <i>Amie Whitemore</i>	307

A Poem for Trapped Things <i>John Wieners</i>	308
blackbody <i>Candace Williams</i>	310
First Words <i>Phillip B. Williams</i>	312
Root Sutra <i>Morgan Grayce Willow</i>	314
Turing's Theories Regarding Homosexuality <i>Tobias Wray</i>	315
The Trick <i>Mark Wunderlich</i>	316
The Kiss <i>Yanyi</i>	318
The Gods among Us <i>C. Dale Young</i>	319
Flora and Fauna <i>Amanda Yskamp</i>	320
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	323
CREDITS	325
CONTRIBUTORS	337
ABOUT THE EDITOR	375

I GREW UP in the hilly fields of a Minnesota dairy farm, and no matter where I live as an adult, those fields and pastures are the homeland I carry inside me, complete with cows, insects, crops, and prairie plants. That farm, as well as my life there, was hard, messy, and dirty, but still, I loved it. I believe we all have at least one such place that we carry, and I also believe that poetry, perhaps more than any other medium, can locate it, can recreate it. But for years, I couldn't find a poem that celebrated this gritty place; instead, I found lines about bountiful, golden harvests and bouncing baby calves. These depictions didn't tell my truths, which made finding them and developing them in my own poetry that much harder. In addition, as a gay farm kid, I was aware that if an animal doesn't reproduce, it's unnatural and useless. This commonplace rural wisdom impeded my ability to express the queer version of the homeland I carry. For a long time, I couldn't figure out how I fit in, but still, I loved it, even if the story I was being told about what was right and worth appreciating in nature excluded the most important parts of me.

So, what did it mean in nature for a boy attracted to other boys? At that age, it suggested to me that nature had made a big mistake. Did I belong in nature at all? I wanted to, but everything around me seemed to suggest that there was simply no place, no use for me. Discovering poetry as a teenager and dedicating myself to its study as a freshman in college, I quickly and easily found celebratory pastorals redolent with flora and fauna as well as transcendent contemplations of life and death linked to animals and the passage of seasons, but these poetic conventions investigated the birds, the bees, and quite often, deer. I read everything by Robert Bly and James Wright, two poets with whom I share a landscape, but not an orientation or corresponding attitude toward nature. The speakers in their lyric poems evoked harmony with their natural surroundings, a harmony I didn't recognize in my marrow. It wasn't until much later that I found poems that responded to nature in a way that spoke to that homeland inside me: Ed Madden's filthy poem "Viscous" conjuring rotting hay bales and drying semen; Amber Flora Thomas's "Field Song" evoking the damage the human body does to a field of wheat. Both poems moved beyond the golden glory of harvests and depicted a nuanced, sometimes antagonistic, relationship with nature. In other words, before finding poems like these, I didn't find my queer life in the place where I had lived so long and knew best or in the poems I loved most. These poems opened a door, and they allowed me to see beyond the clichéd and expected; they showed me how queer nature can really be.

Because queer and trans poets have been writing about nature for as long as everyone else, the problem is with the canon of nature poetry. The lack of representation hindered my artistic development as an adult as much as my romantic relationship skills were hindered by all my teenage years in the closet. My experience wasn't unique; many of the poets in this anthology probably encountered the same issue, the same feeling of alienation. And in 2015, I decided I wanted to address this obvious gap.

Gathering queer and trans American poets from the nineteenth century through the twenty-first, such as John Ashbery, Richard Blanco, Jericho Brown, Natalie Diaz, Emily Dickinson, Thom Gunn, Audre Lorde, Mary Oliver, Kay Ryan, Adrienne Rich, and May Swenson, I approached this anthology with a sense of generosity regarding what the form and content of the nature poem could be and tried to suspend my skepticism for what couldn't or wouldn't fit. Many of these poems make statements, implicit or outright, on the following topics in addition to nature: appetite, body, death, desire, gender, habitat, home, hope, love, metamorphosis, monstrosity, nation, race, and of course, sex. As I searched, I also became more aware of how the construction of farms and cities had destroyed and displaced nature. Poems embodying this truth needed to be more chaotic, dirty, and nuanced than those I encountered. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I didn't want to restrict the nature poem to the outdoors or to the "wilderness," a colonial term, in recognition of how built places are communities, habitats, and contested sites, as one notices in such poems as "Closing the Gay Bar outside Gas City" by Bruce Snider and "Taking a Visitor to See the Ruins" by Paula Gunn Allen.

Neither did I want to restrict the nature poem to feminine and masculine concepts imposed upon the more-than-human world, especially through the myth of Adam and Eve. In contrast, the Medusa, "the Queen under the Hill" of this anthology, is a better ancestor because her phallic snakes recombine the male and female and allow her to represent the human and more-than-human world. She is shameless. Many of these poems defy assumptions of feminine and masculine and write powerfully at this intersection of the human and more-than-human. In particular, some poems exemplify the defiances and inversions of gender that define their speakers but that are also commonplace in nature: most plants are monoecious (containing both male and female parts) and make ready and apt images for queer and trans poetics. In "Boy with Flowers" by Ely Shipley, the speaker refuses flowers when an aunt genders them as female-only and finds solace after top surgery in the final lines:

“[e]ach sewn tight with stitches, each a naked stem, flaring with thorns.” In conversation, Cameron Awkward-Rich’s poem, “The Little Girl Is Busy Asking Questions about Desire,” describes a girl becoming a tree, which serves as a metaphor for the speaker’s transition from female to male. All through this anthology, plants and flowers represent queer sources of joy and mystery. In “Bottle Gentian,” KateLynn Hibbard speaks to a hardy prairie flower of its quiet and closed strangeness—a botanical introvert from the more-than-human world. Of course, in Allen Ginsberg’s “Sunflower Sutra,” the rambunctious speaker addresses a withered sunflower and asks, “Poor dead flower? when did you forget you were a flower?” and compels readers with uplifting admonitions such as “we’re golden sunflowers inside, blessed by our own seed & hairy naked accomplishment.” In ecstatic, extraverted exchange, the drag queen speaker in Benjamin Garcia’s “Ode to the Corpse Flower” declares, “I am the week-old ham hock whore of horticulture” and sings “fuck Whitman fuck Pound // give me Emily D.” Dead, alive, or filthy, flowers help many of us articulate identities.

Of particular delight were poems that fully infused the queer into nature in new and unexpected ways. Some poems exist in their own weird biomes and according to their own terms. For example, Kay Ryan’s philosophical poem “How a Thought Thinks” transforms a thought into a mole-like creature chewing underground—a queer contrast to the lofty thought processes celebrated in European philosophy. In “Enskymet,” Antler evokes the incantatory joy of being interred in the sky until, after downpours, all that’s left of one’s life is petrichor—a liberation from the metaphysics of earth and sky. Don’t we all yearn for an explanation that will unbury us, once and for all? With the rain, we evaporate. In *Queer Nature*, this poem is only one example of how water is implicit to queer, poetic transformation.

As a force of contradiction, mutability, and impossibility, water is described in these poems as black, brown, burning, clean, disturbed, divided, fresh, laughing, knocking, murky, oily, open, and parted. In “Fairy Tale,” sam sax writes of a boy who becomes an infectious steam, queer and dormant, inside his lovers from the baths. As a contrast, in “Sex” by Nikki Finney, steam redeems, rather than infects, lovemaking. Just as water is representative of the mutable, powerful, and transformative, so are bodies of water, including waterfalls and rivers. “Diving into the Wreck” by Adrienne Rich, one of the landmark poems of twentieth-century literature, deserves special mention as an origin myth and the likely wellspring of so many other poems. Her speaker describes the arduous and solo dive into the sea, an

androgonizing process in which the animal, elemental, and unnatural must work together for the diver to recover knowledge that was never recorded.

If you are a queer or trans person occupying a built place or landscape and people question your right to existence, you might find yourself asking versions of two questions that have echoed throughout my years of editing this anthology: *Who belongs here and why? Who and what gets to be natural?* I have included poems that confound assumptions or offer possible answers to those questions. In his poem “Outing, Iowa,” Oliver Baez Bendorf offers an alternate, queer framework for the rural and reclaims rural geographies from scarecrow stories. In “Amphibians” Joseph O. Legaspi contemplates the mutuality of amphibians and immigrants through metaphors of land, water, skin, and breath. Answering both in a different way, Kamilah Aisha Moon’s powerful poem “Shared Plight” shows us the natural history of New York City in which Black people exist as animals to be hunted and a natural history of America in which Black towns are unwanted herds to be eradicated. Becoming the animal can be transcendence or dehumanization, dependent upon what person or system is transforming whom and why. Included, too, are many affirmations of our belonging in the world. “Coal” by Audre Lorde is a lyric of ancestral Black power, one derived from the metaphor of potent, elemental energy stored by and within the earth. Finally, the speaker of “Hermit Crab” by Stephanie Burt transforms her shell into a metaphor for her trans identity.

Years of delight and discovery went into editing these poems. Over and over, I returned most often to considerations of homes and biomes unlike mine, shell or wide-open ocean, and placed them in contrast to the Garden of Eden. I considered how we have never been unnatural. No matter how many times that story asserts its authority, we predate Adam and Eve. We have always been intrinsic to the world, and in this anthology, we are claiming a place.

In that spirit, *Queer Nature* makes its own place for this first, wild gathering of queer and trans poets. In these pages, you will find the birds, the bees, and, quite often, deer. Gay bars, riverbanks, bedrooms, fields, and forests are a few of the habitats in which these poems lament and sing. The inspirations and wisdoms these poets have to share, I leave to each of their individual geniuses and queer thoughts.

MICHAEL WALSH
De Soto, WI