

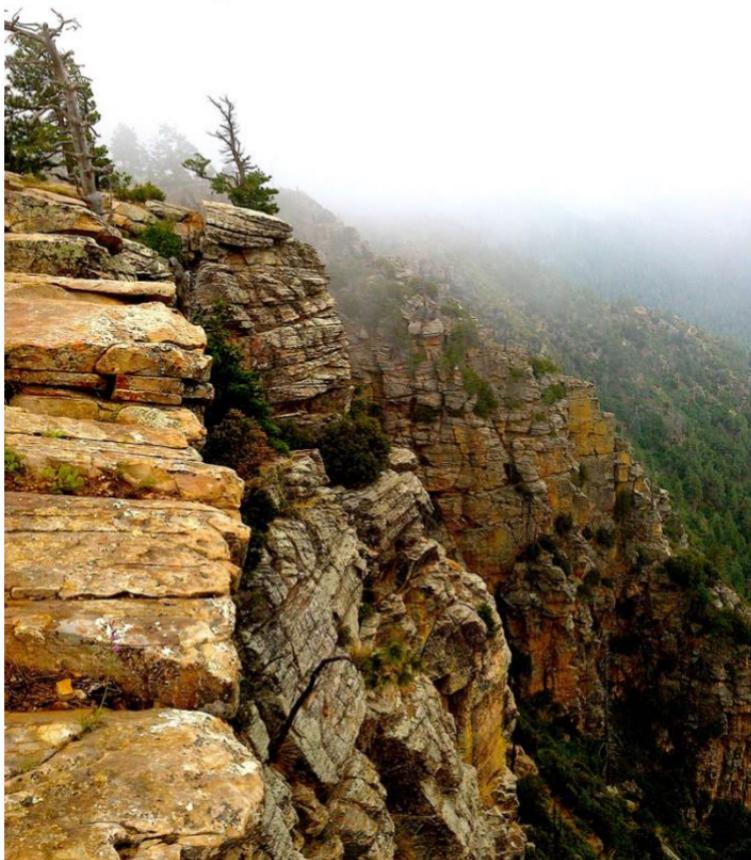


Poetry: All forms & Styles

Writer's Portfolio:

Allisa Cherry

# Mogollon Rim



2021 Pamphlet Series

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**Cover Image:** *Mogollon Rim* by **David Pinter**. Fine art photograph on a Garmin  
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## Mogollon Rim

Light falls at an angle  
along the forested path  
like knives sliding into a knife block

and my father's swollen knuckles  
threaded between my small fingers

puts an ache in my hand.  
I spent a sleepless winter  
watching the moon outside my window

grow fat and thin  
while my father lamented his dead son.  
Now I am, you might say, afraid of him,

as we set out like Isaac and Abraham,  
our faces red with cold.

And when we arrive where the pine grove  
splinters into a clearing  
a quiet descends

attending a mule deer giving birth,  
her wide eyes fixed inward,  
her burnish undulating

over the motion of an unborn fawn.  
I want to rush

toward this swollen moment.  
A sprint coils in my haunches,

my tongue drops  
from the soft palate of my mouth.  
But my father

is already pulling me back  
into the tree line, whispering *bush*.

## Here I Take

the road's black quiet selvedge.  
The yellow cheatgrass  
grown right to its shoulder.

How it bends softly toward center.  
How it pulls me to the internal line.  
I drive fast.

Cedar brush blurs into unbroken hedgerows  
I cannot see beyond.

I second guess myself. I forget,  
then remember the cliff you went over.

It was early in September, still hot,  
still filled with the sting of deer flies.

And you in your concert t-shirt  
and your mismatched socks  
were not dressed for death.  
You were dressed as though

you were ready to enter  
the beginning of everything.

You were not dressed  
for the brutal work  
of razing our father's house,  
though you took to the task.

You salted his gardens  
and tore out his paths.  
Now isn't our God

a belligerent god. He never enters  
when called upon.  
He creates exits in unholy places,

the shoulder of a little-used highway,  
a hospital shower, the parking lot of a bar.

Here he took my surfeit of sunshine.

The steep incline lined with velvet scrub  
seems almost kind.

It should have passed you gently  
hand over hand and set you down softly,

never to rouse from your drunken slumber,

never to wonder at the crack in the bend  
where forever two things might happen.  
Like a rough-legged hawk,

you rise up and dive over.  
Or you wake up just in time and lean,  
like cheatgrass does,  
back toward the centerline.

## Fatherland

The dry grasses left  
by the herefords  
rattle like bone slivers  
in your red clay soil.  
Cottonwood pods  
cluster at the fence post.  
A crow eyes the coke bottle  
between my knees.  
I do not love you,  
Arizona, and I said  
I would never come home.  
Now hours from the border  
my sister's eyes  
are two basins of water.  
It is only a mirage  
that I ripple toward her  
like a highway  
at its vanishing point.  
Where a ship might  
emerge from a seam  
between this life and the other.  
A ship captained  
by our dead father,  
conveying his kin, all made  
of silver compounds,  
overexposed and shimmering,  
inexplicable, on your skyline.

## Exegesis

It is because of my brother,  
who will never be twenty,  
I comb the land around Lyman Lake  
seeking in its rough folds  
that fracture where he gave this life  
the slip. As if it might be marked  
by a Utah juniper, its trunk  
slowly twisting in a high desert wind,  
its dusty blue berries  
a door code I will punch  
and finally enter a room  
where it is always the moment  
before his head splits upon stone.  
Where the stars keep spinning  
toward daybreak and the pickup  
still teeters at the end of its long roll.  
But it is hidden from me

by a nimbus of sage,  
by threadleaf groundsel  
popping off its yellow sass,  
and snakeweed hiding the sinister truth  
that he was not made to outlast me.  
Someday soon, the lupine will rise  
like blue spears from the dust.  
The globemallow will bloom  
to be devoured by ants.  
And I will see his death  
happened everywhere at once,  
so the earth raised a thousand descansos  
that said *here* and *here* and *here*.

## Moses, When Sleep Descends

It is a thousand crepe-winged  
sycamore seeds. I dream of you,  
if by *dream* I mean no longer  
hem in thought's tattered fabric  
where you trail, loose thread,  
worrying the back of my leg.  
If by *you* I mean your absence.  
Everywhere I look, you are  
not. Every door to sleep opens  
into rooms where you do not bide.  
And your absence is not the rough  
brush of winter bedding  
against collarbone and throat,  
nor the thoughtless press of pubic bone  
to mattress ticking. Your absence  
is a thorough lonesomeness. I crave  
to be Borremose Woman, pressed and saved  
below a thousand pounds of heather and sedge.  
My ears stoppered, mouth stilled, eyes  
darkened to the threshold of you  
departing. To be both light and flightless  
is to be forever  
suspended in a stillness  
of which you are not part.

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## About the writer:

Allisa Cherry has recently received an MFA from Pacific University and completed a manuscript that explores the way faith, like landscape, is reshaped through violence. Her work has received Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations and can be found in Westchester Review, and at EcoTheo and SWWIM Daily.

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