**Spit**

Andrew Schwartz

Moonlike sun sheds meager light

through mist so thick it blots the freeway

and hills dotted with homes that lean

from age, shaken earth, and a January whose only water

is this morning’s fog, defiant as the slick black posts rising

from the bay where perched cormorants, pelicans and gulls ignore

the shore, crystalline eyes piercing smeared air.

The dogs shamble through high grass toward scrub eucalyptus,

its mangy mane lifted high on one side, blocking

the light. On the other, it sweeps a temporary fence that keeps

no one and nothing out:

not the homeless men hiding from cops,

not the feral white cat, not the bird-eyed

woman in baseball cap and baggy jeans desperate to keep

this spit of land untamed. Once, when I wouldn’t sign

her petition to keep the park service’s dirty hands off

the homeless tents and guerilla art, she hissed and shot

me a killer look. She thinks she’s preserving

some natural wonder, as though 30 years ago

this place wasn’t the dump where I’d bring lopped limbs

from my gardening job, as though chimney chunks

and rebar making their way to the surface

are mountains forming, modern-age granite miracles.

Today, my dogs brushed hers. She chirped at me

and I told her I wasn’t in the mood. But now I can’t stop

seeing the light in her eyes, the way wild anise

mirrored in near tears, made her seem one of the birds,

clinging to whatever it is that makes them whole.