**Kasia**

Kateri Kosek

In Poland they called me Kasia, this family I’d never known. They had a name for who I was. I cast aside my real name, too clunky, too English for hayfields where storks loitered behind tractors, gobbling up frogs. For gnarled stands of primeval, sandy forest and red plastic buckets

of raw milk my uncle brought in every day.

I introduced myself by these bright, soft syllables, trying on this name that everyone knew, that didn’t require repetitions and explanations. The nicknames came easy—Kasiu, Kasienka slipping from their mouths, diminutives that got longer, not shorter, in Polish, names that might ease thirty years of not knowing.

I praised the universe for Latin roots, for the Polish words I’d heard all my life—*herbata*, tea; *dobranoc*, good night. For the familiar chatter of barn swallows darting around the dirt yard of the farm where my father was born, hurtling themselves through open barn doors, inches from our heads.

At night, rounds of homemade vodka. From the balcony of my cousin’s room—the east aglow at two-thirty in the morning, the marsh gurgling with squawks and trills, the greater intoxication of not knowing frog or bird, of having no names for these things.