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Olivine

Virginia Smith Rice

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VIRGINIA SMITH RICE

OLIVINE

The surf is a battering,
brutalized sound, and all at once

the ocean is old for its age, agitated by its own
exhaustion. But beneath the sea is another

sea not yet turned to water. It lifts us in its hours,
dissimilar and intimate.

We hardly notice, shrugging our bare
figures sketched on the shore, immersed in deferment.

Cliffs, with their sad-mouthed caves and luckless
candor, are painfully real next to us –

brill-brined, clotted with touch,
they sicken and contract. And the green

gravel stacked in our heads? It takes all we have
not to kick it up, spread it around.

Look at us posed here, a host of ringwoodites
grinning by our castles. Locked in our cells

we carry our moment of sea
and catastrophe. We are drown, dissolve, release –

that bloom-flash of contact, when one body swallows
another without resistance, and all at once.