



On Earth As It Is

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Transubstance

Nicole Walker

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prayer as story, story as prayer

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photo by matthew simmons

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The word morph sounds so soft but there is
tugging and there is pulling. The unsticking of legs
from the threads breaks any thoughts of grace.

The newest butterfly just knocked into his neighbor
pushing him off his post where he was hanging by one
spidery limb. Her next move: unspooling her tongue.
Testing anything—wind, brother, plastic—as edible air.

A proboscis evokes creature not sweet thing. Antennae,
bent legs and papery wings do not immediately spell
baby breath and sunrise. No. More grasshopper than angel,
these butterflies, still, read Acridid more than laridae.

When the locusts came, they came in ugly tornadoes,
ripping into entire fields of grass, an acre per second.
A winter's worth of sustenance swirling in an million insects'
stomachs. A conversion of mass. Such a frenzy doesn't go

unnoticed. The world loves beauty and scar in equal
proportion. Seagulls, no one's favorite birds, but saviors
nonetheless, enveloped disaster, swallowed winged flutters
into their bellies, then rose up, flew again, absorbing them all.

Nicole Walker is the author of *This Noisy Egg* (Barrow Street Press, 2010). Her poetry and creative nonfiction have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *North American Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Fence*, *Iowa Review*, *Fourth Genre*, *Ninth Letter*, and *Crazyhorse*, among other places. She has been awarded a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and she teaches at Northern Arizona University.

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