

## Post-Industrial Wilderness, Rejoice!

I propose a Post-Industrial Wilderness designation  
where we sing hymns of abandoned  
collieries slowly decaying into rocky  
soil strewn with concrete and shovels.

Let us call these corrugated hillsides Wilderness!  
Let us rejoice in rust!

Let us rejoice in the stutter step cadence  
of walking rail ties that lead into headwaters  
trickling out of mine shafts covered by hemlock.  
Let us place limestone back into the water,  
an offering, a prayer of reclamation.

Let us hail this river that was once alive then killed  
and now is burnt orange but thriving with wild trout  
and there, that's a midge fluttering above the neon oily  
sheen but that's life, that's resilience, that's wildness  
returning and spreading and goddamn! that's beautiful!

Let us bulldoze the dams! Let water run wild again!  
Let it grow, all of it, even the invasives!  
Let knotweed arc over thistle and beer can.  
For what is native in a place that has been scraped  
and curled by furnace blasts?

Let us lay in the debris of our consumption  
and smile when we feel worms between our toes,  
glass shard pushing into the back of our calf,



a plastic lid crinkling under our fourth rib  
a cement wall in the kink of our neck  
a fleck of neon light that never stops  
shimmering in our eyelash.

Let the earth swear at us  
Let us love these curse words  
Let them become sacred  
lines, holy prayers that heal  
the cracks of our destruction.

Let us rejoice in the harmony of mountain laurel and anthracite!

Let us rename this slag heap with signs  
marking the boundaries of the abandoned:

Post-Industrial Wilderness

Let it Grow.



## Dead Water Deities

I hike rails deep into a cold hollow crease of the Kittatinny Ridge  
where I build a railbed-gravel fire, warming plunge pool psalms  
of cloudy sunset stains as trout shoot under schist ledges.

I pray to these dead water deities, water gods lost  
to coal and pyrite that have returned and reclaimed  
this rusted ravine.

Deadwood burns a life of light and heat into ash  
like these hills once burst into fire and smoke as machines  
pierced and gouged and scraped a landscape interrupted.  
Now woods sing in winds old ballads of bones creaking  
in rivers, of saints butchered under floods.

Fires die floods recede, but the rhythms of these rails  
and abandoned totems gather into eddies of song,  
chants for the gods of a new world,  
native brook trout that survived in headwaters,  
wild browns that have migrated from big rivers,  
the seeds of a rewilding.



## It's Just the Moon.

It wasn't long ago we could just  
turn on our faucet and drink.  
Straight out of the garden hose, even.

But then a few new roads cut across  
the far ridge and bright lights started to shine  
in dark oak woods. Well pads. I used to be able to see  
the Milky Way more nights than not. But now, just the moon.

And now I get stuck behind diesel and 18 wheels on my way  
to work down valley with the road crew. We get to repair  
more potholes and install more guardrails. It's good money  
and I only have to take off when the hard freeze settles in  
which is only a few days a year usually in February, not for those  
long four months December through March like before. No.  
Just a few days. Just the moon and me on those nights I have off.

But then our water turned brown a few months back and it smelled  
like an old wool work shirt stuck behind a radiator and now I spend  
my Saturdays when I'm not working road crew filling jugs. I even  
installed a gravity feed system so I can fill that large container I  
have on the outside of the house so we can take clean showers.

I thought we were just drinking water,  
but it was full of radon and arsenic  
and now it's harder to sleep.

We have to close the blinds and pray it's just the moon.