

RUTH FOLEY

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On Finding a Clam Shell in the Pine Needles

For a moment I think it must be  
a moth, some kind of giant flying  
insect struck down into the duff  
after a night of seeking a moon  
too distant for breath. Or a child's  
bowl, chipped at the edges and cracked  
in the middle, stained. It is two  
hands making a cup to lift water  
from a stream. It is ears bent together,  
straining toward a fading radio signal.  
Sea-smooth, it lies open in our small  
woods, maybe uncovered by  
the earth-mover a developer brought in  
to clear land for a house nobody wants,  
not even him. Maybe carried from shore  
for the compost, for its slow calcium.  
Or by a bird—we're not that far away  
from the tumble and hush after all;  
sometimes the air fills with salt, smells  
for a breath or two the way air should,  
and I am home. I'd like to think  
it is meant as some kind of signal  
but I couldn't say what for. To move  
closer to the shore, I suppose. To wet  
my feet. I want to lift it to my ear, but it  
is not the right shell. And what if, after  
all this time, it has nothing to say to me?

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## ABOUT RUTH FOLEY

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Ruth Foley is the author of *Dear Turquoise* (dancing girl press 2013), and her poems have appeared in *Extract(s)*, *Sweet*, *River Styx*, *Bellingham Review*, and *Reed*. She received an MFA from the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast program. A professor of English at Wheaton College, she is also the managing editor of *Cider Press Review*. She lives in Attleboro, Massachusetts, and blogs at *Five Things*, [fivethingsthatdentsuck.blogspot.com](http://fivethingsthatdentsuck.blogspot.com).

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