

RUTH FOLEY

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?

HERON TREE
30 March 2014
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ABOUT RUTH FOLEY

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.

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