

By Natasha Sajé

You and me, of course, and the animals
we feed and then slaughter. The boxelder
bug with its dot of red, yeast in the air
making bread and wine, bacteria
in yogurt, carrots, the apple tree,
each white blossom. And rock, which lives
so slowly it's hard to imagine it
as sand then glass. A sea called dead is one that
will not mirror us. We think as human
beings we deserve every last thing. Say
the element copper. Incandescence
glowing bright and soft like Venus.
Ductile as a shewolf's eyes pigmented red
or green, exposed to acid in the air.
Copper primes your liver, its mines leach lead
and arsenic. Smelting is to melting
the way smite is to mite. A violence
of extraction. What's lost when a language
dies? When its tropes oppose our own?
In the at-risk language Aymara
the past stretches out in front, the future
lags behind. Imagine being led
by knowing, imagine the end as clear.

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