

Andrea Vale

Urticaria

Decades away drops melt off the Arctic caps and slip down my veins,
licking a hive map in their wake — I'm itching, unsteady, tugging clumps
of mascara off my eyelids and uprooting the lash with it like a planted
beet

I try to remember what it had been like before I was born

I can feel my capillaries undulating out into the air around me, unfurling
and stretching towards the clouds like bloody ribbon

Roots shoot out from under my fingernails when I dig them into the
earth, lifting the nail off the skin and cracking into the dirt below
Vibrating with the ground
Rumbling with moss and acid

Because there is no internal
I know when to humble myself, when I step out of the ponds and the air
rushes on me, flooding my pores like porous rock

My innards clench when it's cold on the mountain
Hemorrhaging with the metallic bite in the wind
The swell in one corner of the world makes a wave in another, and my
tendons tugging and pushing with it
While my nerves alight in flames during winter

My hands are bloated when the trees stiffen
A cold front is coming

My bones align with the rotating of the earth on its brittle spine, those
months when my body becomes barren

I can feel that my body is ashes, latent and hardened for now but one day
crumbling to a pile and chewed by the earth

I know I am alive because my nerves twitch like the muscles of the
mountains stretching down to the riverbed, trails of orange clay dotted

with emerald brush

There is a house within these ribs

But if you sliced me open you'd find a hummingbird inside

And when the world shivers so do I, furling in on myself like the receding shorelines