

JOYELLE MCSWEENEY

*[Like any light now breaking in the sky]*

Like any light now breaking in the sky  
I am the arrow: I ride and I decline.  
My throat's an ulcerated weapons cache  
where radioactive gunsights bleed their toxins  
in groundwater. Birds rear up, deranged,  
their mitochondria are scrambled. They cannot steer  
by stars. I'm as disheveled: my lungs  
raise two black flags inside in warning, boil  
like frogs, flap, release fawn-colored scum. Skimmed  
from my lips, my only utterance, my spit  
is studied for its signs. Gross sibyl. When Death  
leans in, his staff's encircled by a viper.  
I adorn him with my spittle, with my cipher.