

VENTIFACTS

Christine Hume

A windy tree tempts her to devote herself to interstices, to partake in its shivelights and shadowtackle. She climbs up to disappear. Wind pitches her past inspiration: trembling leaves, inaudible decibels. The tree casts everywhere its seedy eyes. Wind blows off cherries. It devours a sleeping pink rabbit. The girl is alone, wind-drawn, withdrawn from herself. A microphone held up to a window. Wind roars through her, releasing a joy that's been petrified, dark, and furtive. When it comes, this joy is the main thing. Yet as soon as it rushes in, fear washes over it: joy and fear take turns with her. Those chapters of joy and fear are her story, as if suddenly, in spite of it all, she has expectations.

In Nietzsche's "weather prophets," wind tells us nothing but *the now* as seen through *then*: "Just as the clouds tell us the direction of the wind high above our heads, so the lightest and freest spirits are in their tendencies foretellers of the weather that is coming. The wind in the valley and the opinions of the market-place of today indicating nothing of that which is coming but only of that which has been."¹

Wind is a tiny prospect, an active mimetic force working expressly inside things. When there is no wind, there is breeze; there is draft, nascent stirrings, and ominous stillness. Because we live on a rotating planet with fire and ice, the very air brings the threat of wind. It carries anguished assassins. Anyone who is attuned to air knows to look for its tracings and ransoms.

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She stops, shudders, and runs back for the door. It's finally spring and she refuses to go outside. I have no idea how to help her; she's not yet three, gripping my leg. Wind where an ocean had been. Shifting and peaking. Someone puts a rock in her palm to help her feel fiercely unmoved. With large animals, she's brave; in the dark, she's unfazed. But wherever the wind touches her, she grows raw nerve. Skin is a field of nerves where wind had been. It sheds itself. She holds her hat to her head even after we get in the car and all the

way to the store: "I saw an ant fight wind. They were fighting together over the pigeon's toy." She notices flags and balloons batting around on used-car lots. All the branches tack out of time. All the pines bend toward the highway. In the store, she palms the rock as she shouts in strangers' faces, "I'm not afraid of you, wind." Their faces drifting by on dead air.

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A thing in wind is caffeinated, buzzing with aura. Rustling newspaper wrapped around nothing. Wind animates empties. Loose plastic bags derange into ameba-puppets hopping around parked cars in the lot. Marks of visitation, marks of limbo. Open asphalt is a habitat for loose shopping carts, kinetic water bottles, newspaper, and sea gulls tolling for trash. Wind rustles the tissue wrapped around each thing. They are interpreters for the language of wind (not the wind), which takes the shape of anything. A giddy piece of time translates you, too. Whoever wants to inflate, to be carried away, to turn tail, to come skidding back, to change and exchange is susceptible to the wind: *take me with you, away from forsaken here.*

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In Portugal, according to Pliny the Elder, wind-foals could get you there. When the winds came, mares set their tails against it and conceived "that genital air instead of natural seed." In time they quickened and gave the world "foals as swift as the wind," who never lived longer than three years.² This is a literal second wind, intensifying what's there briefly then taking leave. A joke might begin what do a second wind and love have in common?

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Back out of this now: as sudden as car lights reeling through the windows. Remember the howl so loud that the sun's burning could not be heard. The steel curtain of wind slammed shut my mouth, the wind shuts, it seizes. By its little bit of gravity, it lifts the cherry-stained rocks. And blows through the locks of serial portals. Bending back my legs, wind fills me with air embryos. My bloated womb floats out, hangs like a threatening cloud. It grows ears and listens. Once it spews its infant winds, it must be lured back into the hip bones — candied, glittery, whispering bones. The infant wind kicks, it sucks whatever sticks out. It pulls down

switches. It won't be stuck in a wind suit. It unzips and zips. Grabbing my red ears, it rattles my rib cage audibly. The ear is the last face, and the wind puts distance in it.

Wind arouses amorphously, omnisciently. It excites water, skims up little slanting waves. Whatever the sun intensifies, whenever it boils, the wind comes along as its ecstatic relief and release. Wind is sun cum. Spewing seeds, debris, and rays. It is all tentacles, all jellyfish experience, a weather-vane theater with hooks and stays.

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Once when I was tiny the wind carried me to its river; I was its ghost because I turned everything you said back. I was its shadow then and wrapped myself around you. The ghost was information. Her voice pours like red and white from the icy divide, clad in seven skins. It blurs vision even when I look through wind and do not look with it. As if everything we know is tingling between dusk and silver. If you can find the still spot, you are in the divine eye.

Aeolus, Africus, Amaunet, Anzu, Aquilo, Ara Tiotio, Aura, Auster, Ays, Bacabs, Boreas, Bucca, Buluga, Bunzi, Chaob, Chi Po, Chup, Coatrischie, Corus, Dagoda, Dagwanoenyent, Dajoji, Ecalochot, Egoi, Ehecatl, Ellil, El Nuberu, Enlil, Eurus, Fa'atiu, Favonius, Fae Lian, Fengbo, Feng-Po-Po, Fisaga, Fongshihye, Fujin, Ga-Oh, Gubancex, Ha'hl'tunk'ya, Hanui-o-Rangi, Hau, Haya-Ji, Hermes, Hine-Tu-Whenua, Hotoru, Hraesvelg, Hurakan, Ilmarinen, Kabun, Kaikias, Kami-kaze, Kon, Kukulcan, La'a Maomao, Mamacocha, Mari, Matagi, Mata Upola, Matuu, Mbon, Michabo, Neoga, Ninlil, Ninurta, Njord, Notus, Óloma, Oonawieh Unggi, Oya, Paka'a, Pan-gu, Quetzalcoatl, Raja Angin, Rudra, Saishiwani, Saúshuluma, Shine-Tsu-Hiko, Shu, Shutu, Skeiron, Stribog, Susanowa, Szélkirály, Tamats, Tate, Tonga, Tsailútsanok'ya, Tua-Uo-Loa, Tawhiri, Tempestates, Unáhsinte, Vatam Vayu, Ventolines, Vila, Vulturinus, Wabun, Wakwiyo, Yansan, Ya-o-gah, Yondung Halmoni, Yu Ch'iang, Zephyros

She's inside that animal, the body of a cosmic animal with the sun as its inner, stellar eye. Wind is the novice and probationer of a more advanced order. She is sustained, infused, captivated by its mixed airs. She will live through its illusion.

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All winter she has been immune, overbundled past sensation. Now her bare arms and legs prickle-electric. On the baseball field, she runs crying. Trying to run away from the wind on her skin. She tries, crying and hearing a roar of nothing. Sometimes it's still like that — fleeting and loaded. When I am running with the kite, it looks like I'm with the wind bolting away from her. But my breath is held until, *see*, I shout and point skyward. She is running and crying. *Look*, I say, *look* as our blue kite lifts into the blue beyond. It is difficult to approach the beyond in a good mood. Wind knows dispiriting voids. Its source is hidden, like a human's. The kite string snaps for the third time. She wants to go home, and is afraid of being blown home.

Singing along the road, the story gets blown away again: *I'm a cradle, I'm a cradle, I'm a cradle, I'm a cradle, out in the wind. Teems of down laying me lounge. I'm a cradle in the peat rot windy night.*

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Four fevered winds stagger out of the south, and dissolve before arriving. Way ahead, flags slacken, then a bleeder goes by, a crazed galactic blast elides with green skies. Convective excesses accelerate through saltation and creep. Beyond the wind, Herodotus and Pliny describe, is Hyperborea where people live in complete happiness for a very long time. That static joy there has no traffic in our civilian lives, where we can only imitate emotion. In windlessness lies our last chance of self-erasing.

When air is locked in a moon-pocket, a sudden bird might rip it open and pilot a storm. The magnosphere cannot save us from this visitation. We station ourselves around town — connected and concealed by its thousand white horses and forty-nine purple horses, and arrows from Arjuna. Wind's frontiers proliferate. One of us tries to swallow it; one of us tries to lure it into her bottle; another keeps shoving it down a big crack in the black rock. Its exorbitant body updrafts, its heart beats faster than we can hear. When yardangs — wind-sculpted land — start rearing up, everyone stops and sees sphinxes.

Wanderer, where are you?

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Take the shape of music: in whistles, hushes, rustles, and howls, it produces tones in rhythm. Wind was first music, whereas nature mostly makes noise. Take the shape of a giddy piece of time; keeping time, curtains interpret the language of the wind (not the wind), which also gets into the clock. As Laura Riding observes, "Every minute for itself."³

Take the shapes of wind as language: whirl, helix, sheet, and zigzag. The whirl is where the horizon cannot be remembered. The helix sends you up in a war column, surrounded by turkey buzzards chasing tail. The sheet interred you once; next time it comes, you will build a raft. The air's damned genius is to control the tension of your longing. The zigzag synchronizes like an audience clapping. It cannot go on like this.

Anyone who has ever stared too long into the wind waiting for someone to come through knows: It cannot go on like this.

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Sleep in a field of turbines, each over a hundred feet tall, three blades going around like "that's the way," "uh huh uh huh," "I like it." The turbines act with one mind to summon the power of love. Braiding horses' breath and breaking smoke on the blades. Nine airs lash into one wind. Memories and predictions hold hands and spin themselves giddy: new forms push out, uncoiling. Make a wish on a turbine. Ask the sky to hurtle underneath your skin, to suspend you. Your memory of flight comes with a confidence that you will be able to hover, at least, levitate for a split second. But it doesn't take you. Wind does not make events move faster, nor does it turn speech into music, but it can translate a lapse. Voices run through; if a word clings there, it is remembering "nothing." Uh huh uh huh. Wind's voice must never be let loose, no matter how close to sleep you creep.

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Children have often vented their invincible wrath into the wind. My child points her finger accusingly at what the mind might dis-

place: shovel, echinacea petals, dirt pile, color of everything painted. Things hold their own longing to self-destruct, to be lost or disappeared. She wants to be sure I stay. She fixates on the missing ball. Imagines its pleasure in rolling away. Dandelions gone to seed send out the wish for their former lives. To roll back, to skid back under the radar, under the semiotic bar. Before she was born. I can now only imagine before she was born. Temptation mixes with the brilliance of willful things.

Perhaps she thinks about her room filled with a windstorm generated by the visitor's entrance.

The will of the wind comes in. Its true wailings are mythical lustrations. It pronounces tones, a proto-music. Wind is a noisy flock that mosquitoes bite as they ride. Wind is an animal born of space. A low one can be taken for a snake; a forested one can be taken for a witch. The wind has a tongue like a bell, an alarming chorus of planes, barking dogs, people shouting and squealing — all accompanying their own directions and odors: cow shit, hemlock, and cigarette smoke bring an early night stupor.

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When I was pregnant I sat on a wind farm listening and dividing. I would not be party to a hermetic cycle; I would tap a new source, and become less responsible for my token selves. Dividing and divided, undecided, I sat under turbines, a coin kept turning. The turbine blades issued that day an acre or so of unknown. Rotary and helical winds combined into feedback loops, but the universal joint pivoted and propelled electromagnetism in spirals. Wind is reported by the direction from which it originates. Start again: horizon-and-sun whorl in the eye. The fulcrum uplifts and twists, catching me in a rhythmic mote of questioning. Its rhythm opposes any instant of relief. Around and round rhythms lay down words among the straying planets. Wind is a circulatory system with cybernetic steering. The eye's inverse-wind draws things to it, even the newest ear sucks down whatever it can. An ear in utero forms and functions at five months The dark torque of the curve reintegrates light and sound.

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Furred wind carrying unctuous tongues.
Southern anabatic winds sand-pelting the eyeballs and sticking.
Permanent winds that never bloom, but carry putrid, stagnant
smells.

A three-day wind out of California spitting fire on the skin.

A secret wind blasts, startles the grackles.

Typhoons that repeatedly deterred or enabled armies to attack.

The east wind was parching.

White wind throwing stones at statues.

In red wind, turbine blades sharpen.

Anticlockwise, wind rewinds a lone delight.

Smells on the wind like music, a premonition that you won't come
back.

My daughter declared war on the wind.

Once the officials sent a poison wind to her country as a warning.
She became wind-drunk in minutes. She became a surprised spec-
tator, dizzied with its alien energy. Then the entire ground was
inches thick in petals and pollen, breaking her fall.

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Wind-driven grit abrades the walls — domestic blowouts follow.
Whistling into dark, shiny stains called rock varnish. The wind
leaves rock varnish as it creates deflation zones. For instance, a dark
shine wedges itself between my daughter and me. She runs out on
the balcony to catch some wind in her hands; she runs back to sic it
on me. In a mood to court suffering, her fingers have veins that go
right to the heart. Her outburst is shaped and sharpened by wind,
ventriloquism is the effect. She offers me poison windflowers and
turns and runs out again, on a second wind. She is trying to inflict
me, to set anguish upon my face. Over a dozen times she is coming
at me, her fists full of wind. Its projectile impulse is a spell pouring
over us; it convulses us in pleasure, chafes us, blizzards a dull mel-
ancholy. In her fists, she is holding and releasing me. Mama-froth in
a blurry puff-bonnet, mother of atrophied arms and evacuating lap.
We only guess why the tributaries.

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When we do finally launch the kite, she calls it a piñata. She watch-
es it being battered about, jerking violently in all directions. We do
not see the wind, we see its affects, its palpable punch and drag. It is

thrilling to watch. Despite its agility and occasional grace, the spectacle identifies her helplessness. She waits for candy to fall. From the howling wound.

“We can tell whether we are happy by the sound of the wind. It warns the unhappy man of the fragility of his house, hounding him from shallow sleep and violent dreams. To the happy man it is the song of his protectedness: its furious howling concedes that it has power over him no longer.”⁴

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I wrote the letters in black marker on her knuckles, saying, would you like me to tell you the story of Right Hand and Left Hand — the story of move and rest? R-E-S-T: It was with this left hand that brother struck the blow that laid his sister low. M-O-V-E: The right hand, the hand of move. These sister fingers are full of flow, on the go. Now watch and I’ll show you the story of life. These fingers are always wrestling one another. When the fingers intertwine, a secret law unlocks. Now watch them. Brother Left Hand is fighting. And it looks like MOVE’s a goner. But wait a minute, MOVE comes back on the break, Sister Right shows us what she’s made of. It’s MOVE that won, and REST is down for the count.⁵

HEAT and COLD are the parents of MOVE; repeat the above story with them as the actors in a pyrrhic victory. We think we see opposites instead of transitions. We think we see countless undulations, twistings, breakings instead of hands.

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By eroding a mountain, sometimes wind found diamonds and venomous animals, or flora that emitted devouring blasts of miasma. When a wind bloom blows out a candle, a new eye is born. It is an eye that doesn’t open, it lets her stay inside it. Wind was once used to cure eyes that see a blade in every edge. To soften up sight. Purity isn’t a matter separation from wind — she could never see herself dissolved into it or melted out of it — but her terror contains a more intensive contamination.

Failed or stalled wind projects stud the coastline like shipwrecks — CapeWind, Bluewater Wind, Padre Island, Long Time. While the off-

shore wind industry searches for its clinching narrative — it harvests, harnesses, mines, taps, or traffics — a suspicion in what we can't see digs itself in. Why not strap a bridle on god? Would windmills become worshiped icons? What if I need that air to breathe? How can you bury what you can't see?

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Wind-mind contains vertigo, the smell of moon-must and sun-feathers. Once it beats the earth bare of yesterday's creases, we forget the germs in a gale. Memory launches itself into the future, flaunting forth on an air-built thoroughfare.⁶ But wait, the reversal takes you back so far, you are looking straight ahead. Wind gaze blurs language. In Chicago, the lake effect reminds us of a time before she was born, which is incomprehensible to her. All three of us are walking hand-in-hand to the lake. She immediately inverts the sharpening air, drawing us to the future, which is when she is big and I am little. Wind is sibyl, carrying germs that will speak your future. Carrying off half-thoughts to the echo tunnel. To get to the lake, we walk through windy tunnels under Chicago highways. We pass through knots and streaming: "Cadillac" the tunnel says today, "lilac," "sad sack," "heart attack." A man had written in the beach sand huge letters spelling out "FEED ME," but the words are gone by the time we arrive.

¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Wanderer and His Shadow." *Human, All Too Human*. R.J. Hollingdale, trans. New York: Cambridge UP, 1996 (391).

² Pliny. *Natural History of C. Plinius Secundus*, trans by Philemon Holland. London: Centaur Press, 1962 (95).

³ The wind at last got into the clock,
The clock at last got into the wind,
The world at last got out of myself.

Riding, Laura. *The Poems of Laura Riding*, editor Mark Jacobs (New York: Persea, 2001) 191.

⁴ Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia: Reflections From a Damaged Life*. E.F.N. Jephcott, trans. New York: Verso, 1974 (49).

⁵ Adapted from a speech by Robert Mitchum in *Night of the Hunter*, 1955.

⁶ This and many other phrases throughout have been paraphrased/misremembered from the poetry of G.M. Hopkins.