Self-portrait in Stillness

I watch myself as one watches deer;

a practiced taciturn so as not to startle

her, me, away.

Something young and bowlegged, among the trees.

In stillness, I am easier to catch.

Phantom scent of a venison feast lingers,

makes me fidget long

into sleep, unrest. I wake

to think someone watches me outside my window.

But, no, no, I am wrong. It is

the smell of the tall tree falling,

the necessary death of deciduous elm,

as it becomes fertile forest bed.

Rings blossom from my gut,

in a nauseous and buoyant expanding.

I count them,

and I am older than I thought.

Now, still, I listen to my undergrowth as the truly ancient

do, sending signals beneath the roots.

I learn I am hungry. I learn I am tender. I learn