

Cranes
Lauren Frey

One afternoon, years later, I heard a sound,
the clearing of a throat—

it was the laugh you'd let out
after those early morning swims on empty stomachs

under the excessive yawn of our Southern California sky.
It was the breath of you in your scratched up BMW

on the shoulder of the coast and
barely hitting stop signs coming home from our post.

It was the silence of you standing in the kitchen without desire
where you told me that I could have my myths.

It was the sound that meant
I was tucking myself too far back into particulars,

that I was trying to possess your words
without repeating their sounds,

like when I once said, why did god make ducks,
and you said, with that laugh, so we'd admire the cranes—

and then that sound, that sound I knew,
was nothing like your laugh at all.

Lauren Frey earned an MA in English from Georgetown University in 2019, where she was a Lannan Poetry Fellow. She was also the project manager for a Mellon Foundation grant that supported graduate students in the humanities in their efforts to explore meaningful work beyond the professoriate. Her other writing can be found in *Full House Literary Magazine*, forthcoming in the *Textual Cultures* journal, and in her storytelling Substack, *Off the Shelf*. She currently works in the public health space and is based in her hometown Portland, Oregon.