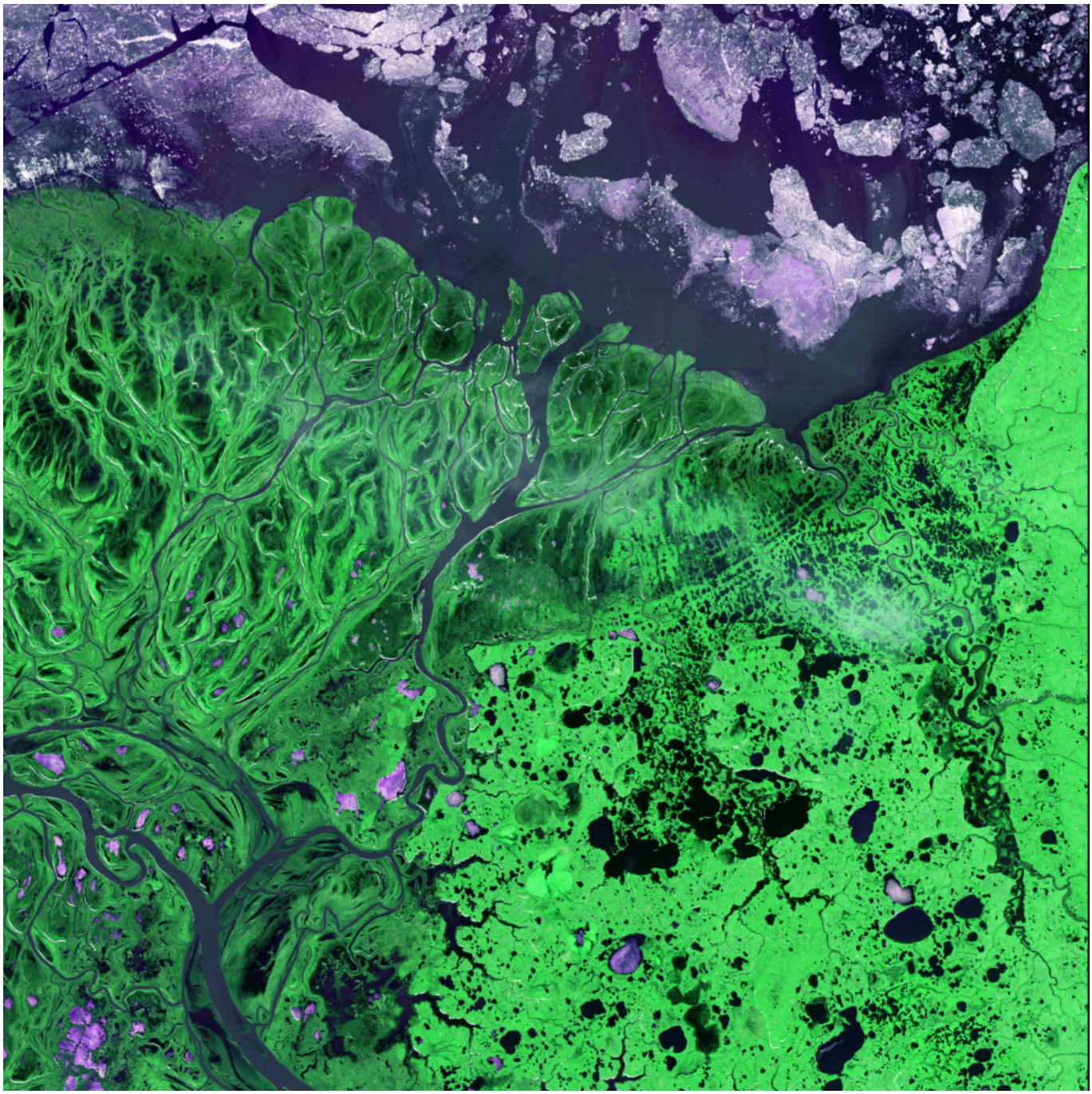
New Poetry from Shana Youngdahl

After the Maine Tin Min Company Prospectus, 1880

The earth has veins we can
open with our hammers.
Follow the cassiterite crystals
down where the iron dark
is picked by the swings
of men who name minerals
by the feel of them on damp
fingers, the bands of elvan
quartzite like the rough
footprints of mythical
man, or the smooth track
Of native silver, or gold
Ore floating in the salty
Rubbish of St. Just. Imagine
Fellow capitalists, what
Enterprise can find
Rose colored mica, purple
Fluor spar, tourmaline,
And a thin river of
Tin Ore imbedded among
calc spar crystals, follow
that river, I say, crack
the vein open.



To Find the Center of a Circle from a Part of the Circumference

Which is all I am really after, the path to the midpoint

and how to get there from this little arch

of my hand I'm told to *span the dividers any distance*

and with *one foot on the circumference*

describe the semi-circumferences: today pollen and blue sky,

book bound in navy cloth and draped with black

velvet. The ache in my wrist, throat and head dull

like the birdsong we stop hearing weeks ago.

I’m trying to find the center: the point I can cut from.

I pencil out two indefinite lines and lean

under this dome into the illuminated center.

Someone a very long time ago, told me to call *point P.*

There is comfort in such specifics, but still I feel

like all the unwound clocks that fill old buildings;

there is something I am supposed to do, but

in the fog I am unfocused, turn my head

to another arch and am led away.

—

1.

First or only?

My child is three—
wakes three times

a night
has no room

I would know. Wouldn’t I?

Piling her piss-soaked
blankets on the wood floor
I leave them to fume,

wait for the calendar or the swelling.

8.

I know
and don’t. I’m half-open
hungry, two days
from late.

I dreamt my name wrong.
I dreamt a boy laughing,
my girl pulling his

baby boots on, spelling
her own name that I
could read by water.

37.

Find
a stone to fit the palm,

our last iris, photographs of daughter’s wet curls, half-burned

and broken candles, recall when sister

believed the rainbow alive.

Collect your pebbles.

38.

I leak
dying larkspur and the strain
of mileage.

It’s a glass night,
with clean towel,
and midwives in
the basement room
where spills won’t
wet spines and this damp
brings the cool harness
of crying.

39.

We set out walking
the child grabs a stick
points at clicking marmots
shakes the trees and piñon
bleeds into her fingers
she twists it into her hair.
She is pitched
and dust rises like fire
billowing between sisters.