

WAYNE THIEBAUD

Green River Lands, 1998
oil on canvas, 72 x 48 in.



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BRYNN SAITO

The Exile

If you are the country
then I am a prisoner
cast into exile

making my way
to our shore home in dreams
then waking in the north

where stone drives me mad.
Now the world is a free thing:
formless and stark.

Tin cans everywhere.
Rain filling the tin then
spilling over.

There are no names
for this—
the charge of a river

flooding the embers
shaking free roots
of the oldest trees.

Today my grief turned
to a dream—a desire for home.
The desire filled me.

The dream itself
was its own kind of paradise—
false but perfect

bearing the details
of our wild life, the spectral lines
of a world wrung dry.

I could have waded forever
in the familiar dark
but I chose flight—

or succumbed to its leanness—
and left you in the river.
Then I leapt into lightning.

Brynn Saito is the author of *The Palace of Contemplating Departure*, winner of the Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award and forthcoming from Red Hen Press in March 2013. Her poetry has been anthologized by Helen Vendler and Ishmael Reed; it has also appeared in *Ninth Letter*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Pleiades* and *Drunken Boat*. Visit her at www.brynn-saito.com.