

LAURA WILLIAMS

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COURTESY THE ARTIST

LUCILLE LANG DAY

LIVE!

Live
to see fields of California poppies
glow again—four-petaled,
shining orange corollas
like silky flames floating
on long stems above
a lacework sea of bluish leaves.

Live
to hear trees buzz with cicadas
contracting and relaxing
their tymbal muscles in summer
while barn swallows with
dark wings and rusty breasts
croon long, twittering songs.

Live
to taste aged cheddar
and French bread on the trail
while Steller's jays strut,
their punky feather crests jutting
upward, and Oregon juncos,
black-hooded, savor bugs.

Live
to touch the buttercup's
yellow satin, the checkerbloom's
smooth stem and hairy leaves,
the sticky monkey flower's resin,
the cobweb thistle's spines
and red petals, toothpick-thin.

Live
to sniff bay laurel leaves
broken in your palm,
their sharp, oily perfume filling
your nose, and brush against
coyote mint, its leaves
releasing their sweetness.

And if you can't live any longer
in your beautiful body
made of stardust, sonatas, and rain,
then live in the sighs and easy
smiles of your children,
the muscular rooms of

our hearts, and the clusters
of treelike cells in our brains
where the moments of your life
return like the poppies'
small fires to light up
bleak fields again and again.

Lucille Lang Day has published eight poetry collections and chapbooks, including *The Curvature of Blue*, *Infinities*, and *The Book of Answers*. She is also the author of a memoir, *Married at Fourteen: A True Story*, which received a 2013 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Literary Award and was a finalist for the 2013 Northern California Book Award in creative nonfiction. Her short stories, essays, and poems have appeared in more than one hundred literary journals.