

JOSEPH MILLAR

Mistletoe

It's the morning after the big rain,
the daffodils twinkling in the alley
and the sky still gray

through the giant maple branches
where we can see a clump of mistletoe
way up near the crown

and you wonder
because you are always curious,
how do they get it down?

The internet says
they use a shotgun to harvest it
or else they explore a swamp

where the plant digs its rapacious roots,
its *haustoria*, its mojo hand,
into the bark of an oak,

then lives off its water and nutrients
the same way it does on dry land
with its smooth oval leaves

and death-waxy berries,
a goddess's pale tears shed for her son,
issue of her divine flesh and blood

struck down in his youth by an arrow
made from its delicate wood.

And now people kiss beneath it at Christmas
or beside the bonfire at solstice

their mouths together, enmeshed for a time,
as though willing to host one another's life force
and testing the acid and alkaline—

and maybe we should get married again,
this time with music and a big white cake,
the plush moon shining dim and opaque
and a honeymoon riding a train.

Joseph Millar's first collection, *Overtime*, was a finalist for the 2001 Oregon Book Award. His second collection, *Fortune*, appeared in 2007, followed by a third, *Blue Rust*, in 2012. His latest collection *Kingdom* will be released in early 2017. He has won fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as a Pushcart Prize.

ROS CUTHBERT

Polyzoa, 2016
Collage with gouache, 15 x 11 in



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