

Varnished

Kendra Preston Leonard

published in *These Fragile Lilacs*, Summer 2015

There are motley barnacles on my past,
jagged-edged, impossible to remove
without a knife.

Every once in a while I think
maybe they're gone, peeled
away by salt water, diffused, diluted,
but then I cut myself on them.

With time, and the sun, some have
softened,
their shapes more fluid, familiar,
bearing the scent of rue
rather than columbine.

I look to them for reminders
of my own defects,
as they were seen and as I saw,
though which today I scarcely greet.

And despite repeated oaths
my hand upraised against time,
the unsettled shells
cling to weathered thoughts.

If you then look away
to finer lives and clearer minds, naught but
to sun-bright memories,
feel no shame.
I am myself so
varnished I sink with
gravity.