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Bucks

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Bucks

Three mule deer, antlered bucks—race past,
giving me just time to catch sight of them
below the studio, follow them out of sight—
the oldest, largest, rack of many points—
and even the youngest, multiple—family,
I wonder? or pursuing the same doe? Soon
they'll lose those antlers, dropped to duff,
for another season of regrowth—

and I wonder
how the body knows to make, each year,
out of grass and bone, a tracery more elaborate
than the last? A branching advertisement
of the self, a more elaborate pair of weapons
in the combat of the rut, or wisdom growing
over the years? and what do men make
and carry as a heavy weight upon their heads?
to shed, each year, and begin again?

I remember the antlers of a moose we found
and brought home to our backyard—how
over the years small teeth gnawed it down
to a nub—calcium, phosphorus, and minerals
repurposed to the bones of mice and squirrel,
possum and fox, in the recycled world.

Robin Chapman

ROBIN CHAPMAN is the author of ten poetry books, most recently *The Only Home We Know* (Tebot Bach, 2019). She is recipient of *Appalachia's* 2010 Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared recently in *Flyway*, *Poetry East*, and *Terrain*, among other journals.