



Patterns of Attraction

I fall in love with a woman every
year or two at the tar pits, memorize

her inflections while thick masses stir and spit bones. She tells me what
she's never told anyone else,

every time. I like sitting with her
in close dim spaces, lean into corners of the shack she's

built and hardly notice it shifting. Sometimes I want the trail
of her fingers on tendons of my throat; sometimes that doesn't matter. I learn

whether she breathes enough to ripple the thick
black surface. I show her pulsing traces of the route to wherever

I live and decide she knows me.
Sometimes she does. A feather spins out

of passing air and then rests, gray-flecked
like horizons, until

it's sucked in. (There are years I don't go there at all, and I talk
like I've forgotten it.) I touch her thin skin lines while she lies

languid at the edge of the abyss and whisper through
tunnelled lips *I'm the one who can save you* as if

it were true and as if it mattered.



Gemma Cooper-Novack's debut poetry collection *We Might As Well Be Underwater*, a finalist for the Central New York Book Award, was published by Unsolicited Press in 2017. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in more than twenty journals and been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes and Best of the Net Awards. Her plays have been produced in Chicago, Boston, and New York. Gemma was a runner-up for the 2016 James Jones First Novel Fellowship; she has been awarded artist's residencies from Catalonia to Virginia and a grant from the Barbara Deming Fund. She is a doctoral student in Literacy Education at Syracuse University.