

## Two Poems by Jeff Burt

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### The Weakness of Mountains

I breathe mist,  
coupled hands  
cupped for rain,  
but even a tree  
cannot hold a storm,  
a mountain slides, weak,  
and the streets that carry  
a thousand cars  
wear, holes appear  
and asphalt as large  
as fists wash to curbs  
like old men in the economy.  
Violence respirates,  
steadies in the embrace  
of another's palm  
that while I look away  
sings in the trees  
of nicks and bruises,  
my loss, a wish for darkness  
to cloud over others.  
Malice is one stage  
of ferocity  
removed from murder,  
looms on the electric  
horizon zinging  
through my rusted nerves  
raising the hair  
on bare knuckles.  
I want to break something,  
want to break,  
want to be broken.

## Scarcity

Break scarcity in half  
you don't get bread

dip and wine  
but scar and city.

To a field they mean  
the same disfiguring,

slash, hashtag, burn,  
methods of branding

to identify a face  
and destroy a place.

I think of food first  
oral, anal,

not of contact  
with the natural

but the natural  
removed from contact,

cement removing  
the concrete for the abstract,

the asphalt, wind-swept  
for street-sweep,

sanitary,  
salutary,

slim slice  
of green space

displaced,  
widening wedge

of towers  
parked in the weltering sky

**Jeff Burt** lives in California with his wife amid the redwoods and two-lane roads wide enough for one car. He works in mental health. He has work in *The Watershed Review*, *The Nervous Breakdown*, *Spry*, *Atticus Review*, and *The Monarch Review*. He was the featured 2015 summer issue poet of *Clerestory*, and won the 2017 *Cold Mountain Review* narrative poetry prize.