

*a train derails in ohio &  
they still won't say the name of my country*  
Mandy Shunnarah

The way the news anchors talk, it could've happened anywhere.  
Main Street of Smalltownsville, south of north & east of west—  
let your imagination do the navigating.

The linguistic gymnastics,  
the dance of verbiage, the passive voice called objectivity. They say  
*eastern Ohio, rural Ohio, on the Pennsylvania border*, voices  
balking at the town's name.

Even though it's not east Palestine  
as in the West Bank but East Palestine as in a white man in Ohio  
who read the newspaper & knew geography from other white men  
thought it was a neat name.

On derailment day, metal beams and  
railroad ties split the town with fire, leaving chemical miasma  
in their wake. Broken axle, a penny on the rails, same difference:  
bitter particles lodge in throats.

Chickens quake & keel during  
the controlled burn, but the army says there's nothing toxic  
about spilled vinyl chloride & butyl acrylate. It's already flavoring  
the water. Already salting the air.

Just one of many moonlit rides  
through East Palestine, but you only hear about destruction when it  
becomes disaster. The cameras only turn on when our suffering is  
entertaining.

Our rescuers tell us nothing's wrong as we watch  
our nameless world ablaze. At least one Palestine has deliverers  
& redeemers. At least one Palestine hasn't been forsaken.

When one burns, it's not just the will of a cruel god.