Two Poems: Footprints and Word Chain

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Footprints

There is a language in the Pacific Northwest
in which the words for footprint and understanding
are one and the same.

For some in the field of digital media,
cinema is index, an attempt to make art
out of a footprint.

Robinson Crusoe in his limbic solitude
kept a calendar to tell him the footprint
would be left by Friday.

Metonymy, the trope of presence in absence,
is the footprint in the sand that mutely mouths:
we are not alone.

The French for film is pellicule, a little skin that
may be black and white or often pink on
the soles of our feet.

Our pink feet have swollen beyond recognition,
the prints they leave out of all proportion with our
understanding.
Word Chain

Magpie, heron, bramble,
wren,
ottomer, acorn, adder,
kingfisher, conker, willow,
fern,
dandelion, bluebell, raven,
heather, starling, weasel,
newt,
ivy,
lark.

When you have read
this list, swallow it.
Wait a day, then write down
what you remember.
Send your list to a friend
with the same instruction.

This is one way to make
words disappear.
There are others.
ANTHONY PURDY lives and writes in rural Nova Scotia, where he is happily acquiring a new skill set as he repurposes himself as a writer of fiction and poetry. His first story, “The Map in My Head,” can be found in the Spring 2020 issue of Queen’s Quarterly; a second story, “HB,” appears in the Summer issue, and four poems will follow shortly in Prairie Fire and Queen’s Quarterly. Literary writing offers him new ways of exploring some of the concerns and questions that animated his research and teaching at universities in New Brunswick, Alberta and Ontario.