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# All Mistakes Were Once New

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# All Mistakes Were Once New

## **Abstract**

There is always someone who has done  
unspeakable things to a child, an animal,  
a room or tent or cave or car of them.  
To be insatiable isn't to be  
unbreakable. You can mistake  
damage for passion, the heel of a hand  
slammed into a wheel for pride, a glass  
ashtray heaved at an iron radiator  
for pluck or verve...

## **Cover Page Footnote**

All Mistakes Were Once New was originally published at *Booth*.



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# BOOTH



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## All Mistakes Were Once New

by Leslie Adrienne Miller

There is always someone who has done  
unspeakable things to a child, an animal,  
a room or tent or cave or car of them.

To be insatiable isn't to be  
unbreakable. You can mistake  
damage for passion, the heel of a hand  
slammed into a wheel for pride, a glass  
ashtray heaved at an iron radiator  
for pluck or verve. Rage  
that just keeps coming  
might look like a fear  
you're keen to quell,  
like a body open only to you,  
its expanse of yeasts and oils  
entering the mind like a field,  
furrow and tussock, a teaming  
wreck of dry clods furred  
with curled grasses and open above  
to anything that can fly.

If you live long enough, you think  
you can escape that dazzling expanse,

maybe outrun shame while you're at it,  
arrive somewhere quiet and wild  
with a companion who wants  
nothing of you but to share the fire.  
But watch someone you love pass  
from this life, and you'll see  
the flaw: shame takes us  
all the way to the door,  
and those who love us most  
are a misery of maneuvering,  
even as they mop our brows  
and bury their noses in our hair.  
They want us happy the only way  
they know, which is to say  
they carry us by clump and crumble  
into futures we can't share,  
and make of us the vistas  
they hoped for all along.

Leslie Adrienne Miller's collections of poetry include *Y*, *The Resurrection Trade*, and *Eat Quite Everything You See* from Graywolf Press, as well as *Yesterday Had a Man In It*, *Ungodliness*, and *Staying Up For Love* from CMU Press. Professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, she holds degrees in writing and literature from the Iowa Writers Workshop and the University of Houston. Her website is <http://lesliemillerpoet.com/>.