I don’t know how it happened. I was reading online about snow leopards and how they’re losing habitat, and, now worse, the tree line, the actual place where trees can grow, is moving up, thanks to you-know-who (Voldemort, global warming). The snow leopard finds the heavy fact of trees non-negotiable. He prefers the liminal space of snow and
sky. Snow leopards have been on the verge of extinction since Peter Matthiessen’s great book where he tracks the snow leopard through the Himalayas where he meets many lamas, where he never sees a snow leopard. A whole book of never finding. A whole world of too much finding. While I’m reading about leopards, about lynxes, I’m also looking up micro words, as I do every day. I clicked twice. At dictionary.com I learn that another name for snow leopard is ounce. How we pronounce our deaths. No one can take it all at once. A draught of tar a day. An aspirin an hour. A sip of petrochlorate in the water. I am done. I am done, I say every day. I do not think I can do this any longer. This living slow. This slow dying. This world squeezes out snow or leopards ounce by ounce. The snow leopard, unfound by Peter Matthiessen, does not exist already. He is a figment, smaller than an ounce. He moves as tree lines move—through hair, and ounce, and lynx and shift. If no one bothered looking, he’d be safely splitting the difference between ouns and unce. He’d be throating the vowels. Coughing up the narrow split. He’d be middle English, middle passage, middle-aged. He’d be done, he’d say every day. Done lynx. Done ounce.