

2013

## The tigers that corner us

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THE TIGERS THAT CORNER US

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A Thesis

Presented to Eastern Washington University

Cheney, WA

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

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By

Merideth L. Jeffries

Spring 2013

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# The Tigers that Corner Us



Poems, Merideth Jeffries

## Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Christopher Howell, Jonathon Johnson, Laurie Lamon and Kathi Baron for their patience and attention to my writing. I'd also like to thank my family for their constant support. I'd especially like to thank my father, who's careful reading and commentary of my poems has encouraged and challenged me for as long as I have been writing. Thank you to World Relief Spokane and the refugee community of Spokane for inspiring many of the poems in this project and teaching me about hope and resilience.

Thanks to Casey Fowler for her time and help with organizing the manuscript as well as opening her home and kitchen for study sessions. I'd also like to thank the rest of my classmates, whose influence and commentary were invaluable and for teaching me about poetic craft through their stunning poetry.

Lastly, thank you to Matt Jeffries, my husband, whose faith in me has pushed me to accomplish more than I ever thought possible.

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## Section I

Duh Ceu

You barely made it through your education,  
risking your life to sneak across the border  
into India to study God's word. And like Paul,  
you went to jail for preaching.

I remember all the stories you told me,  
though sometimes I doubted they were true—  
like the one about the tiger you fought,  
and catching swallows in butterfly nets as a boy  
to take to market.

But mostly, I remember  
the day I tried to do the right thing  
and it was misinterpreted,  
received with anger.

All you said to comfort me was, "When Jesus walked the world, many were healed.  
Demons fled from souls long suffering, sins were forgiven and still, they hung him  
on a cross and put thorns around his head. "

And I remembered you said the tiger bared his teeth  
as he tried to corner you,  
that you were scared but lived.

Girl From Tediim Township, Chin State Myanmar

This afternoon, Za Lun Mang sits on my lap. We look at photos  
because we can't speak to each other in English.

At the picture of the peony, she shouts, "Pak!"  
She smiles and looks up at me, "Fl-ow-er: Pak," she says,  
not wanting to leave me out, teaching me.

And though I try to understand  
what her mother means when she motions  
to me or to something around the house,

or when Za Lun Mang laughs at my attempts at pronouncing  
*Lun Dam*: Thank you,  
I *am* left out,  
and my country does the same to her.

The Tower of Babel has swayed  
and fallen, the bricks scattered into nonsense,

*but Lord, I think, it's not a tower to heaven that I want,*

*only to listen better to this girl.*

## Moth Orchid

*Moth Orchid, Phalaenopsis, thrives in warm climates, it can be found growing wild in Parts of Burma, Malaysia and the Himalayas*

I saw a moth orchid on the receptionist's desk at work,  
its fleshy, wine and white blossoms open. The stem curved  
like a woman's back, as it stretched toward the tinted window.

Last winter I ran into Van Nei Sung in Walmart buying groceries  
with Zung Tin and saw a flake of snow still cold,  
resting on the curve of her dark hair. She smiled warmly,  
but I couldn't help thinking she felt cold and far away from home.

## Girl at the Market

When I was her age, I wouldn't have been allowed  
to leave the house like *that*. She was barely past the sixth grade,  
but her olive skin, pure as a doll's, was rouged,  
her lips smeared a dusty rose wine.

Designer skinny jeans clung  
to her straight, thin frame, and an ebony wisp of curled  
hair draped over her eyes.

I was surprised it was a comic book  
and not a glossy magazine she pored over  
with the fascination of a scientist  
discovering new life.

## My Hindu Friend Blesses Me

Gyanu tells me, his last name, Bahadur means brave,  
his sister's name, love.

"And yours?" he asks.

"My parents didn't know when they named me,  
but my name is Welsh for protector. I don't know how well I do that."

"No wait... it means protected" he says.  
I smile, thinking, *how would he know?*

"Someone," he says, "Your husband, maybe someone from above protects you,  
but also friend, it's your moral obligation to protect."

I know he is right.

But I measure the width of my hand  
and see it's only as wide as the mouth of my coffee cup.

## Section II



## Questions for Tenzing Norgay

“I’ve climbed the mountain. You don’t have to climb it...” Tenzing Norgay to his son in an interview with *Nova*.

Tenzing, what is it that urges  
us into cloud cover and ice

where it’s difficult to breathe  
and nothing can live?

It’s a gene that makes us explore or not,  
the instinct that helps us find water

is the same that brings  
us to swim too far out.

Still, some of us reach the corners  
of the earth and beyond,

pressed on by its glory, beautiful  
as it is cruel.

How then are we to stop? And why  
do we yearn to stop our children

from following?

## Tenzing Dreams

Even years later,  
Tenzing still dreams

he is swept up  
in an avalanche

the ghastly WHUMPH  
echoes on all sides

and he fights  
to stay upright

in the flowing white river

knowing how long,  
it could take

to be found.

### Summit View in Winter

Standing above clouds,  
the foothills, a blue river  
in the distance. I will  
never be on ground  
again without wishing for this.

## Snow Ghosts

Shaggy ice-covered tops of trees  
frozen where the wind blew them  
and blinded them with rime.

They lean unnaturally over  
the slopes, frozen men, still and blue  
in the right light,

hardened ghosts regretting  
the impulse that called them  
to this white world.

## Mountain Cold

We ascend through night into dawn in early March.  
Everything white, blue, black, like an old photograph.

The cold here is a throbbing ache in the ear, a slice  
of the wind's knife on an uncovered hand or cheek.

Our breath rises from our open mouths like ghosts  
and disappears into thin, clear air, like many before us.

## Section III

## How Oliver Got Me to Write a Poem

I arrive at a friend's house, and their son Oliver says,  
"Here, eat this bowl of magic I made for you!"

I ask, "What will happen?  
What will eating magic taste like?"

"Well, I don't know, just eat it."

I surrender; scoop the magic out  
with a spoon, and gulp it down.

## Meeting the Princess of Memory

Caitlyn tells me  
she is a princess,  
and when I ask of what,  
she says, "Memory."

She explains she has a silver box,  
and bends down to open it,  
retrieving what, she doesn't  
say. Instead, she hands me  
a butterfly under glass  
in a white wooden frame.

It's wings are delicate  
like paper, and airy pink  
like the first light that rests  
on the skyline each morning.

I marvel at it, like nice grown ups do  
and set it back down beside her.  
She says no more  
about it, or her silver box for keeping things,  
but is distracted  
in her three year old way  
and begins and begins again  
to tell many stories.

I am content to listen  
to the possibilities of making  
pretend things real: a bowl of pineapple pasta  
from thin air, or her plan to become  
small as a bug and crawl across  
the kitchen floor to hear  
the grownups talk.

She mentions now, there is a *Queen* of memory  
too. And I want to know about this queen,  
what she looks like, how I find her, make sense  
of her. But the Princess of Memory is a child,  
and hasn't been searching for her  
like I have. She doesn't care to know  
and begins to tell more stories  
with the white butterfly still  
by her hands.



## Beginnings

Last night I woke from a dream  
of scratching out lines and changing the order  
of words and stanzas.

When I dreamt in Spanish  
for the first time, I knew words in my dreams  
I didn't know in waking and the wave  
of them flowed with the ease of a boat  
through water.

My teachers told me  
it was the beginning  
of fluency.

But no one says what *this* dream will mean.

The motion is not smooth  
but ruthless as a sword slashing and cutting,  
in a dangerous kind of grace,

or crushing whole plants  
for a few drops of oil

## Cat

The orange cat has fallen in love  
with the Christmas tree. He hasn't left its side  
for hours, and lies at its base in worship,  
with paws out in front like a sphinx,  
eyes closed in monk-like meditation,

but like so much we love, it neither notices  
his dedication, nor reciprocates.

## Anna With a Sigh

I'm still waiting for Anna. She didn't come at noon  
like she said she would. She didn't come at one O'clock.

My guess is she'll come at half passed two, but I'll wait, with my coffee  
because I know Anna's many obligations—

to mother and father, whom she's vowed  
to honor, to the church and to Yuri, who tells her  
in Russian, just as she gets up to leave,

"Anyu our golden girl, surely you'll help  
this poor man with his papers before you go."

She's called Anna with the "A" long like a sigh, but lately  
she can't decide, if she is Anna, with a sigh or bright, "Anna"  
the way her American friends say it, with the "a" like in "apple,"  
with a half smile at the corners of the mouth.

## The Barn at Christmas

Thank God Jesus was born  
in the desert. I walked into my own barn  
this Christmas evening  
through a shallow lake of snow,

and when I laid my hands  
on the horse's neck  
there were small, sharp icicles  
like Roman spears  
at the end of his mane

## Selchie

They say, its like a dream or vision.

They come up from the waves

in the gray and blue of storms and fog  
when you long for something beautiful

to swim out of your restlessness  
and become real

or when you've walked yourself into the emptiness  
of pounding waters, ducking in and out

of your own skin,

they come to you in secret, lovely and dark.

But who will believe what you've seen?

And what good will come from grasping to keep it?

## Craiceann

When I was in love,  
I let my skin be stolen.

I gave him all the fish I could catch,  
flooded the rooms of his house  
with their silver scales, pearls,  
and sea water I brought to him  
in cupped hands.

But he worried when the tide  
went out, fearing I'd go too.

One night as he slept, I found a key  
behind a mirror,  
the *craiceann* locked-up beneath  
gray dust in the chest.

Outside, the waves hushed and breathed,  
and before the sun was up, I left

all the pearls and silver scales for him  
and took back the water.

## I Used to See the Devil

walking around down  
town dressed as an old  
man with thin white  
hair under a cap. He'd leer  
through the shop window  
at me while I rang up customers,  
and return when the owner  
wasn't there, to smoke a cigarette  
on the street corner.

He never came inside,  
but passed through town  
when my best friend fell  
in love with a married man,  
and again when I began to date that boy  
she couldn't stand  
because he screamed  
at me most of the time. In those days  
I never slept well. I was sure  
it was him who gave me  
those terrible dreams.

But I forgot about him until  
last night I saw him  
sitting at the bar alone.  
His face had changed,  
And he looked plumper and sadder, the bags  
under his eyes sagging more than I remember.

And I want to remember that he didn't turn  
to look at me this time, and I want to remember that  
in case he shows up again.

## New City

This is no one's café. The coffee, like the hotel,  
is plain and without character, but for a faint taste of citrus that fades  
to something like paper and cigarette smoke before you swallow it.

You look around the room and see, that in fact, the paper taste  
is the business man's tablet at the next table,  
and the cigarette smoke and citrus, the perfume of the woman at the bar.

You notice as you visit cathedrals, museums, tourist shops,

that although you sought advice from friends,  
on how to mask your strangeness, you still feel out of place—

you kiss the wrong cheek, roll your sleeves up too high.

But when you come back to your room, the scent of lavender that grows  
by the sidewalks is in your clothes, and a phrase you say back home is in your new  
acquaintance's mouth, the soil from your shoes on her streets.



## Traveling Alone

I still wear the silver ring  
from my sister's shop,

inlaid with slices of lapis and opal  
like a bright mosaic.

I wore it on my left hand  
on my last trip across the border,

and it's striking blue fit right in  
on the stone streets lined

with colorful fruit stands  
pottery shops and musicians,

and it was suddenly clear to me  
that I was not a vulnerable young-women

traveling alone, like my family  
worried I'd be,

but, myself, alone, traveling, young, a woman.

Tanka late summer

The brown bumblebee,  
wings veined like leaded glass,  
lands on my rough draft  
about spring flowers,  
mistaking it for a rose.

## Chandeliers

In the dark all day,  
they hang like white  
trumpet flowers, or beads of frozen  
water, waiting like the gardener in early spring  
for green shoots to appear,  
waiting, for a hand to flick the switch  
and light the tired wooden floor.

## Decorative Bowl

The potter's hands shaped  
a wide blue open flower  
like an upside down  
quinceañera dress the color  
of the water in Cuba,

but I have never been there,  
and have always been empty,

for fear my shallow walls would crack under weight,  
or my glaze become scraped and imperfect.

## What the Heron Said

Try hunting alone.  
You find the world is not quiet  
in solitude, but full  
with humming, chirping, trickling, whirring  
of bird, bug, water, wind. I am my own silence,  
daily wading long step by long, extending step  
and waiting, watching the reeds  
and shallow pools for what will to come to me.

## Section IV

## New Dog

The new dog is no good with horses. She runs  
in their pens, crouches down and barks.

They toss their heads and stamp. I know  
she's going to get kicked, so I chase her out  
with my strongest bad-dog-voice.

Not so ferocious now,  
she shudders, slinks out, then runs  
off through the forest of monsoon sprung sunflowers,  
that tower over the sage brush and pine saplings.

She doesn't come when she's called,  
but she doesn't bite, growl or chew on shoes either.

I've forgotten teaching takes patience.  
And now, that thought, and her presence  
reminds me, the old dog is gone—

arthritis, blindness; the failing of the body against time.

The new dog trots to me, sits on my foot  
bumps a hand for my attention,

and I feel my own stubbornness to move on,

but the summer rains give new flowers every day,  
and the season continues on without consulting me.

## January, Driving Home

The last year was not an easy year. News of family deaths and divorces piled up in stacks of phone bills, plane ticket receipts, and sympathy cards scattered on our kitchen table. But as I'm driving home today, I notice that the light didn't creep away in late afternoon like it has all winter. It hangs like a lilac scarf above the pines and tall cedars just long enough to get me home before disappearing.

The change in season has been gradual, like wisdom, or healing from a sickness, and I finally noticed it, and noticed the song on the radio, as if I hadn't heard music in ten years. It might've been a shitty pop song, but I heard joy in it even if I couldn't feel it, so I bellowed out the full deep notes and let it thunder through me, and the silence of what I didn't know how to say, as if it were a prayer, as if it were a psalm.



Great Uncle

For Duan

When we met the first time, we both knew  
you were dying.

So, you told me stories, and showed me  
stained glass crosses you made for the church  
near the Snake River in Gooding, and walked me through  
the woodshop you made from what once was  
my great grandfather's house.

The wood in the shop  
lay pale and smooth as bones, carved  
into half finished chairs and table legs,  
and you told me  
that you'd started things someone else  
would have to finish

When I got the call,  
I imagined God had picked up a stone  
from the river and kept it,  
and I felt a piece  
of your stained glass fall  
from a mosaic and leave  
an emptiness where there  
had once been something.

## Why I Still Have Questions About God

There are days when my insignificance to the world  
is obvious to me.

I catch myself thinking back to when I was ten  
and Cait and I lay on our backs in the grass  
watching hummingbirds.

We watched as a hundred divine,  
iridescent flashes whirred and swooped

around the dangling feeder and, as if she couldn't bear it any longer,  
she told me she couldn't believe in heaven any more.

"It makes no sense" she said, "I think when you die, it just goes dark  
and you can't feel anything. Why are religious people so scared of that?

In the end it's just nothingness—"

## Before Your Parents Split Up

On the drive back from your parents' house at Christmas,  
your silence echoed through the steep sides of the pass,  
the memory of their shouting thrumming in my head,  
and the snow slapped the car windshield so hard, I winced.

My father told me men in grief are more like dragons  
in caves than men. It's best not to go after them, he said,  
he won't take your kindness and he might breathe fire.  
Better to let him come out on his own.

Still, I wish I could go back in time  
and wrap my arms around the child you were,  
and shield you, come fire and smoke or not,  
from the things that were not yours to bear.

## Planting

I loosen the hard ground for ages,  
pulling weeds rooted deep, pitching rocks,  
displacing earthworms, clumps of dirt,

and press the bulbs  
of iris, tulip, and daffodil  
into the black soil.

The fading light on the pear trees' red leaves  
grows rosy, amber, then gray-blue until it's dark

and all I can see  
is how dirty my hands are  
in the porch light.

My knees are smudged  
from kneeling so long, as if praying,

as if these bulbs are the fears I don't speak of  
out loud, and I'm waiting

for something  
good to be born from them

You asked me what we should do

I don't know  
what we should do.

I listened to you  
and know now

that life will not  
go on as it has.

I go out to shovel snow  
before the sun is up,

bending and lifting  
the heavy loads

and tossing them  
to the side of the house,

and when I come back in,  
the world is still different.

A snowflake rests  
on my black coat,

large enough I can  
discern some of it's

pattern, but it melts  
before I can see

the whole thing.

I Was Young When We Met

and was ready to throw my fists at anything  
that hurt you.

In a poem addressed in bitterness I said:

“ Love, you take in life  
with wide, open arms.

    Lover of it all, down to the last  
        drifting petal,  
the world you find such joy in  
    served you with a bitter meal  
of wild grass and locusts.”

How wrong of me  
not to understand  
how suffering marks the difference  
    between copper and turquoise,  
how heat refines silver until it's pure enough  
to see yourself in it.

## The Lost Bird

I dreamt of looking into the house  
I lived in at sixteen, the year I was never home.  
I stood outside and saw  
through the window, my mother and father together  
trying  
to catch a lost  
flustered bird who had flown terrified and squawking  
into the white curtains.

On either side they stood,  
arms and eyes upward as in prayer.

My father's handsome face held the heaviness of wanting  
so badly to save it— my mother's face, patience and hope,  
gently calling to it in the language of nurture.

It fluttered, exhausted,  
but they stayed, coaxing it,  
pleading with it to come down.

## Section V



## Fall Tanka

### I.

Yesterday the sun  
was strong and hot, but today,  
  
wind exhales, dresses  
the green leaves russet and gold.

Summer left the day we  
parted, taking with it, such warmth.

### II.

It's over cast and  
the sun is a pale orb  
in the water  
as if it were the moon.

### III.

The wind was relentless  
last night. Red leaves flew

and hid on dark streets.

Tree swayed, bowed against fall's chiding  
them for clinging to the past.

Bitterness before forgiving an old lover

All he taught me  
was how to be strong  
when the weight drifts in,  
little by little like snow.

It starts out light in the evening  
and by morning it's heavy with water,  
and engulfs the flowers for miles  
until all the color disappears.

## Tulip

I placed it on the table  
when it was tall and upright.

Last night, I saw the tight bloom  
splayed open like a white star,

a sprawled sleeper—  
pollen spilling

over the petals about to release  
themselves from their rigid stem.

Its life was ending  
but its lavish openness stayed

with me. All day I thought,

*what is it to be hiding nothing?*

*To be unashamed*

*in such sheer immodesty?*

## Allegory of Spring

The snows have melted,  
and this morning the air was so thick  
with fragrance I grew dizzy

with the heavy-sweet taste  
of lilac and cherry blossoms, the spiced cinnamon  
and herb of early roses.

The breeze whirled their blossoms  
into sheets of the neighbor's clothes line  
and I thought of the three graces in La Primavera,  
dancing blissfully disoriented.

One could lose track of time in such dance,  
be overwhelmed by sensation,  
spin into an arrow and when it's over  
be just as lost.

But doubt has a way  
of whispering small shadows  
into our bliss. In the painting,

Zephyr is not far off,  
Cupid draws his bow with eyes closed  
and one of the graces  
looks away from her circle,

watching the dance slow  
and all of it dry up and blow away.

## Fish Tank

He taps gently on the glass and bends  
to watch each carefully etched fin and breath  
pulse from their gills.

All day they pick up rocks in their mouths  
and spit them out onto a glass floor they can't see  
through, making land where there was not land,  
placing blue rocks where there had been green.

He turns their light on each day and drops manna,  
though he knows he could re-write the story, curse them  
with famine, turn their water to brine. Or could,

in one instant of anger, send the glass crashing  
to the floor and them to drown  
in the air of the morning light.

## Saving a Blister Beetle

The black beetle  
lay on its back on my garden step, legs  
flailing, the edges of them studded with little hooks.  
The antennae was half an inch long, its face  
a triangle, rounded slightly like a dark petal.

It squirmed to be upright, laboring, suffering.  
I stood a moment watching, disgusted and fond,  
before pulling a leaf from my pear tree  
and bringing it to his kicking legs, coaxing him  
to hold on, and placing him in the grass.

Post Card

Mornings, I watch the fat spider  
who lives in the hole in the brick steps.

He glides like a black swan  
across his gauzy lake,  
evading drops from the sprinklers.

I used to think he was menacing,  
invasive, his web nearly six inches in diameter,  
the spindly legs and round body perched  
promptly at 9:00 when I come out to water the flowers,  
still there at 10:00 when the weeding is done.

I let him stay, frightening as he is. No one else knows we're here.

Come home soon, it's too quiet without you

## First Cigarette

I broke it off with Will two days before Christmas. That night the snow whirled around his old pick up like ash, and the day after, the snow was so heavy on the pines they slumped as if drunk or tired. I called an old friend. He drove 30 minutes through the storm and we walked in the dark, close enough to touch. “I’ll shoot Will if I get a chance—” he said, “Or, at least drag him out in the desert with a bag over his head to make him think I will.” He handed me a cigarette, not thinking I’d take it. I breathed in the cheap, harsh smoke and smiled. I imagined the past burning and falling away with the ashes at my feet, mixing and disappearing with the white, white snow.



## New Girlfriend

It was awkward enough that after our wedding your parents said they would divorce, but when they started dating other people, it's like the world turned upside down and backwards all at once. We met your dad's girlfriend for the first time in early summer, and the whole drive over, white flying seeds from the cottonwood trees drifted in and out of the car windows like snow. They clung to my hair and the dashboard, and I batted them away from your face like they were flies. We met them downtown for ice cream and your dad was more nervous than my high school prom date had been, (especially when they got flustered about details of where they were the night before). The sunset glowed a warm orange, as the wind smacked over chairs outside the shop, the white fuzz of seeds whirled in a blizzard, and all the teenage girls waiting in line in their short shorts and bright, small tank tops stood shivering with their dates, who didn't offer their coats, while your dad made fun of your mom's new boyfriend. I had no choice but to laugh. I kept thinking, *this is all ridiculous, it's all so ridiculous.*

When we peeled the wallpaper

it sloughed off the plaster  
like layers of skin.

The floor was covered  
in armloads of its past.

## Breaking the Dishes

Every time I'm handed a glass I'm desperate to let it go. What I mean to say is, that I'm afraid I'll let go of it. I keep having dreams of dropping dishes, cracking mirrors, chipping teacups. And when I'm awake I dread touching anything fragile. Again, it's not that I *want* to smash anything. It's that I know I will. Whenever I'm handed something of value, I can feel my grip weakening and failing. I can hear the crash, see the pointed shards on the floor and all the people I love walking around the mess, trying not to step in it. When I scramble to clean it up, the shards crumble into smaller pieces and disappear. This knowing is a little like that feeling I had on our family trips to the lake when I was a girl. There was one steep bank I always liked to sit by, but it was a long way down if I fell. I would stand there looking down and leaning forward until I could feel my stomach plummet and my body begging me to step back; my mother's voice in my ear, saying, "dear, not so close to the edge, you'll drown before I can get to you." It's most distracting at cocktail parties. I dare not even walk across the room with a wine glass, it's only a matter of time until I send it splashing and slapping the cold tile floors, or it's thin stem snaps and shatters in my hands. Just think of all those beautifully dressed women and men hearing the clatter of crystal and stepping sideways to avoid the broken pieces.

I'm afraid I'm capable of breaking everything we have. Are you afraid too that one day you'll come home from work and all the fragile things we keep in our cupboards will be in a pile on the floor? Our kitchen cleared out of its heirlooms, the China from our wedding in pieces? What about the chandelier in the dinning room? What about the vase from your mother? Promise me you'll help me clean these messes or I'll be buried in no time, it's too much to take care of alone.

## Cleaning House

We'll always have to hide  
some of the mess when guests come over.

I sweep dust under the furniture  
and you run around the house shutting doors  
so no one can see in.

Last week we spent  
a whole afternoon  
with mop and bucket,

and even after years  
in the same house, we discovered  
whole universes of dust we didn't know  
existed under the bed  
and in the kitchen corners.

At least it's not like your parents' house,  
where the dust has been in layers for decades,  
and is out for everyone to see.

They just walk around the dirty laundry  
and piles of dishes like they aren't there.

At least we're still trying  
to keep things presentable,

even if sometimes the broom  
isn't clean and the bristles cling  
to the gray clumps of dirt containing  
our old skin and threads from our clothes,

even if it takes what seems like forever  
to make things better again.

## Section VI

## Home

*"It may be that the satisfaction I need depends on my going away, so that when I've gone and come back, I'll find it at home."*  
(Rumi)

I

My father traveled for work at least  
once a month. He'd leave our desert town  
and come back  
with stories about the ocean.

But when his friends tried to tell him  
how glamorous his life was,  
he nodded and said,

"Yes, I have been to every famous museum  
five minutes after it closed."

## II

### Just South of Home

When I left Arizona for Mexico,  
I believed I was going a world away.  
How disappointed I was when it looked  
and felt the same as my own town,

the same desert quiet,  
*nopales* dotting red clay hillsides,  
dry air and flood of sun each morning.

I walked the stone  
streets looking for anything to make  
me feel far away,

and found Rivera's  
white lilies, being sold on the roadside.

At first I thought I knew those lilies, from paintings  
in every Mexican restaurant back home,  
but I'd never seen them this close,

had never understood  
how beautiful they were.

After weeks the Spanish became clearer  
and for the first time, the Spanish named streets  
at home had reference and place,

and in the same moment I was homesick and satisfied.

## Guanajuato

This city asked me to find a new language.  
I have no word to describe  
the way the light falls on *los nopales*  
above *el centro* in January.

Old structures like my thoughts  
rise and fall like a voice  
or an empire.

I dream with different colors  
      myths, images, histories mixed:  
desert and city, Spanish and English—

And I want a word that says  
today I saw a poor woman outside the church in a blue rebozo,  
her arms stretched, hands open,  
and her legs tucked under her like a little bird.



## Guanajuato

Esta ciudad me pidió que encontrara un idioma nuevo.  
No tengo una palabra para describir  
la manera la luz se cae en los nopales  
encima de la ciudad en enero.

Estructuras veijas como mis pensamientos  
suben y caen como una voz  
o un imperio.

Sueño con colores diferentes  
los mitos, imágenes, historias mezclados:  
desierto y ciudad, español e inglés—

Y quiero una palabra que dice,  
hoy, vi una vieja afuera de la iglesia en un rebozo azul,  
los abrazos extendidos, las manos abiertos  
y las piernas se metieron como una pajarita.

## **Book List**

BLY, Robert *The Man in the Black Coat Turns*

BORGES, Jorge, *Dream Tigers*

BURKARD, Michael *Entire Dilemma*

GILBERT, Jack *Refusing Heaven*

HODGEN, John, *Bread Without Sorrow*

KUMIN, Maxine *Up Country*

LAUX, Dorianne *Awake*

LEVERTOV, Denise *The Sorrow Dance*

MINTON, Helena *The Canal Bed*

OLIVER, Mary *American Primitive*

PAOLA, Suzanne *The Lives of the Saints*

REXROTH, Kenneth *One Hundred Poems from the Chinese*

RILKE, Rainier Maria *Letters to a Young Poet*

RILKE, Rainier Maria *The Duino Elegies*

TATE, James *Shroud of the Gnome*

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*Outreach Teacher, North Central High School and World Relief*

Internship, Willow Springs Magazine 2012-2013  
*Associate Editor, Poetry*

### World Relief

*Refugee Resettlement and Placement Specialist* 2010-2012

*Job Placement Spanish Language Specialist* 2009-2010

### Internship, Winfield Trading Co.

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