

Jenn Blair
Time Again

for what takes up the hour.
My wool coat and shopping cart,
a grim parody of the blind
folded judge with her double
scales and elaborate drapery.
I resent it. The ritual. Peering
superciliously at the canteloupes,
though I know nothing but some
faint dictum about how tender
green buttons ought to give way
but not completely, obliging,
though not obsequious—
errant scrap of advice passed
down from a dead great Uncle
through my mother's mouth.
And as custom dictates,
I cannot simply take the first
one I pick up. Promising as
it may be, I must set it back
down on the pile in order
to further opine, though never,
never (as with all first loves)
without a curiously sharp
mixture of nostalgia and regret.
Across the way, two shoppers
meet and soon move to the
topic of mutual friends who've
rifted. They discuss it in depth
by the bin of out of season
limes selling for a quarter apiece—
puckered, withered, browned.

I have cold fingers and furious demands.

Christa Mastrangelo
Dreaming Red

Last night I dreamt that I was writing
a poem on the front of my dishwasher.

I wrote quickly, thinking the words may be washed
away. I wrote: *you died in the winter*

*when there was so much gloom. Inch upon inch
of snow fell onto the frozen ground*

that would become your grave.
I was dreaming of my cousin

who was newly buried and so young, only 39.
I wrote three more lines about death, though

I don't know what they said. It was too hard
to read with my eyes closed.

I wanted to write about the cardinal
I saw just after I heard the news of her death,

of the sudden brightness of crimson that appeared
in the barren trees, just over the peak of a snow

drift. As if from a dream itself, the shape appeared,
dazzling, impossible not to notice, then quickly

disappeared into the white of the snowing sky.
I awoke, though, from the dream

before I could write this. And so the dream
was really about this young woman's death, but

when I opened my eyes, it was the color red
and the flight of that small bird that I remembered
most clearly.

Dale Dewoody
Road Debris

1991

The black garbage bag rolled out of the truck
in slow motion. I watched from the back window.
Coats, socks, jeans and underwear tumbled
cartwheels across the interstate and vanished
underneath an oncoming semi. I pressed my hand
to the glass. Two shirts and a red sock came to rest
in the grassy median. No one goes back for the clothes.
No one ever goes back.

1996

The time the city put up the new stoplight—
I remember driving you home for the first time,
soft green light spread across the frosty pavement.
You wore a Santa hat and the icicles gathered
around the windows of our snow-globe romance.
We kissed until the light turned red and back to green.
Later the same night, a group of kids shot out the new
stoplight with pellet guns, and we lost the snow.

2003

Big trucks molt tires, black snake skins,
fossils are all that remain on this country highway.
The last gas station died with its owner in '91—
boarded windows, a rusted gas pump and the skeleton
of a propane truck, a museum of the better days.
The payphone still works for a quarter, but the truck
hasn't moved in over a decade; beer can droppings,
the local contribution for the future.
I drive through every summer just to know
I'm going somewhere.