

FOREVER UNNOTICED

VIRGINIA SOILEAU

When shadows are unhinged from bodies,
would their absence even be noticed?
Weightless essences of self flit along a
pebbled river bed, listening to the stones chime
as they are cast in careless abandon—
caught in the fingers of playful nymphs.

Would we remain oblivious as our shadows dance
amongst the dandelions?—clinging to the downy tufts
as they fly on the soft air of a child's wish,
bouncing off the ebony fur of a humble bee.
Coated in a splash of sunflower pollen,
he hums his joy as he busily bumbles his way home.

Oh, how we miss them, as darkness steals them away.
A capricious existence, doomed to vanish at the
whim of a velvety cloud, braiding a path of gossamer
lace across the face of the moon. Darkened—gone—
drifting on the powdery backs of fireflies
to play hide and seek behind our blinkered eyes.

THE IMPRINT OF TRAUMA

COLLEEN RUSSELL-ANGLE

A fossil. A stone, imprinted for life. Buried under layers of mud and silt—preserved. The pressure of the sand and mud use their weight to embed an image, a memory...history. The mud becomes rock and sets for life. Even the brown sludge of the earth can leave its mark. We walk on dirt, we swish it with our feet, it flows through our finger tips; we don't always see what is beneath the surface. Underneath, lies an impression, a stamp, a mark, a scar, a fossil. Something left behind, a sign that "it" was there, whatever "it" was.

Like the plaques on my wall, *I ponder...* My children's hands preserved in plaster. It was years ago walking through the fairgrounds, that we spotted the vendor stand marked, *Impressions in Time*. I remember thinking what a good idea it would be to have my babies hands pressed in the plaster. To fossilize them forever. An artifact of my memories: their precious hands. They now hang in our hallway, a gallery of mementos—like the fossils in the earth.

I wish all imprints were good; welcomed, like the ones that hang on my wall. I wish we could choose which images embed; which ones leave their scar for life. Like the soil pressing, shaping, and preparing for a lasting stamp, trauma implants itself. It chooses.

It was the day of our trial. The first time I saw him since I left. I sat in the courtroom anticipating the moment that he would walk through the door. *What would it be like*, I wondered. *What would I feel*, I kept asking myself as I scanned the room nervously. I wondered if he would use his old tactics of control and manipulation with his piercing eyes; I wondered if my body would shake uncontrollably like it did when I told my story to my counselor, my attorney, and my support group. I feared that he would know the turmoil that was tearing me up inside and that it would give him the pleasure of control. I sat terrified and frozen in thought in the darkroom in shades of brown, like the colors of the marks he used to leave on my body—it reminded me.