

FRONT YARD: TACOMA

NATHAN BARLOW

White picket fence, aging and covered
in moss stands guard at the perimeter.
Paint peels from slats of weatherworn wood
like beads of sweat in the summer.
The gate hangs
from his hinges, a sentinel too long at his post.
Steps of grey concrete, covered
in decaying leaves, reach
up from the street-side walk.
Along either side terraced gardens of slumbering
bushes share the leafy covering.
At the top, a turn lined with waist
high shrubs leafless in the winter wind.
The corner is a patio of moss covered bricks,
a privacy fence decorated in a green
patina of moss separates ours from theirs.
Eight more steps, concrete, aged, weathered,
stones showing through the surface, polished and
bright before the door.
Outside the door, a tall green shrub, the only plant
still holding its own oily leaves.
Embedded within their ovoid, dark
green are sparks of color.
Pink petals fringe the yellow interior,
a beautiful song of spring.
Outside the fence across a bustling
city street whitewashed concrete walls obscure
the view. Against its smooth sides grass grows
green and glistening with dew.
Four crows, sleek, dark, and sinister, search
through the trash left by a careless passerby.
Their actions are us—
We search for what makes us feel alive,
Grey skies grow heavy with the threat
of rain, but we don't care.
Our home is here.

MY FROZEN SUMMER

VIRGINIA SOILEAU

I have learned to despise the very moment of waking.
Not a second is wasted as I am reminded,
with the barest flutter of an eyelid,
how tentative my control has become.

The summer's breath could never unthaw my frozen skin.
My nightmares are lined to dry in the sun warmed air—
freshened each day to be draped over my shoulders
like a winter shroud. Breezy and light, they settle.

Morning sunlight shines brightly through the open windows.
Birds sing of girlhood dreams, ready to be caught in gentle hands,
but my fingers have grown cold and weary,
and my palms feel beaten and cracked like the old walls of my room.
With the morning songbirds, my dreams have flown.

Little girl trapped, waking forever in this winter house of terrors—
innocence beaten to a pulp of desolation
while my will to stand, my will to walk and run, or play,
has bent and submitted to a staggered crawl.
My tears drift like molted feathers, lost in the sun.