

## **FLOORS, scratched**

Floorboards carry a burden, one that  
only the cruel occupants of a house see.  
Feet drag in the salt, mud, and hair from  
outside. We deliver to it countless

crushing blows. The daily dirty feet  
a careless cut into its mahogany bounds.  
It wishes to hold you, to carry your love,  
Everyday these scrapes and cuts create

Strange faces. Floorboards moan but  
none of us can hear, because it is a  
tight mouthed moan, because it is quiet  
for you. While you are sleeping it stretches

its memories to fit the bent ribs of the  
house. It swallows the burden whole.

## The Rock Collector

Unlike rocks, moments are not held together  
by a thousand years of work and worn.

Our delirious happiness comes and goes from  
minute to minute; laughter and kisses are at once  
the only thing that exists, and then go again.  
Rocks do not live like this.

To remember, I break off pieces of the earth  
and put them on a palette. The flighty pebbles  
of Narragansett, the sturdy granite of  
New Hampshire, even the not so ancient  
charcoal littering the paths close to home.

Whether I am sad, frightened, angry or indignant,  
these stones keep their shape in *our* precarious  
breaths. And beyond us they might change,  
but in this life they are constant love.

## **Prayers for No One**

A cracked knuckle  
breaks a quiet fear  
heard in the stacks  
of the university library.

Good enough?

It comes from the  
yet another greasy  
haired girl that hides  
under pillows and  
avoids picking the fruit

from a fig tree.

## **Job Interview**

Here's to all the sneezes that are held tight  
talking to important people.

Like you, they only wish to speak freely.  
Instead, your eyes look toward the  
bright fluorescent lights above trying to will  
the speckled snot to stay in its membrane cave.  
While the gaze of an important someone  
peers beneath their glasses to look through  
you with x-ray vision, hungry for a flaw.

You smooth your chewed fingers  
against a cheap rayon pant leg, and try to listen to  
each question and remember practiced answers.  
Suddenly, important words multiply  
into a hundred nothings as you ACHOO.  
This prompts the important tidy manicured  
hands to scribble scribble scribble with their pen,  
composing a long list of unqualifications.

"Who are you?"

But they want the unwrinkled part;  
the sleeve that is free of white dog hair  
—a blouse without paint marks—  
a life without blemish.

### **King Arthur gets a Makeover**

The mighty king sits old  
and weary waiting to be  
sacrificed (replaced). He sips from  
a can of warm Budweiser

and lets the piss taste  
massage slip down his throat. He  
feels death in his lungs,

and takes a deep breath.  
The air is ashen and hard like  
the speckled stones  
in which he sits all day

waiting  
for his maker.

Then, one day, the very incarnation  
of Perceival arrives  
(young and handsome and only an alcoholic on Saturdays)  
and he cuts off his nose.

The head of a great house  
brought down in  
the middle of happy hour.