

## Three Poems

### SAVAGES

With their ammunition nearly spent,  
the blue-clad troopers in the log stockade  
build a log barricade  
and wedge it into place behind the blocked gate.  
They've long since eaten the horses.  
They lock the captain's wife in the magazine  
with a half-keg of powder and a flint.  
Probably in the final scene  
there'll be time for a last kiss  
before the captain slashes savages with his sword, and curses  
the absent unknowing useless cavalry that will appear too late  
on the brown hill at the top of the TV screen.

I reach for the remote. My mother's hand  
drifts downward, dangling off the sofa where she dozes  
dreaming perhaps of a white-horsed leading man  
ringing the bell of her white plantation house  
bringing white roses  
and a gold ring in a plush velvet case.  
She's still a girl, seventeen, in a blue dress  
with a carefree unlined face

and though savages ring her hills too,  
while she sleeps it's not too late for rescue.

## **WIND**

Wind in the dwarf maple outside my window  
all night shooshes the thousand leaves together  
with a sound like intermittent surf, and wind has also

brought to the garbage-strewn parking lot  
of the derelict drugstore down the street  
a tattered, ragged pair of seagulls

dirty, blown off course, a hundred miles  
from any beach, making their forlorn laugh  
ricochet off the rusted dumpster and the brick walls

where someone with silver spraypaint has claimed  
that "Melissa B. is a whore," and scrawled  
like cave paintings or cliff carvings

a crudely-drawn dripping phallus, rampant  
above the split-V three-line vulva—  
vulgar iconography of loss and hate, of jealousy.

I hear the wind blow cans and something plastic  
against my fence. I hear the far-off chuff  
of chopper blades. I hear the delicate

jangle of windchimes, the ones I gave you  
so many years ago. They wind we stood in then  
fresh on our faces, coming in over the ocean,

salt-tinged, gale-force, blowing all our words away.

## TOBACCO BARN

In wind, the rust that binds the tin of the tin  
roof flakes and flutters to the ground.  
In sun, the old roof groans and cracks  
as it heats and expands, like a loose tooth

worried by a tongue. In ice and snow—  
not that we have much here, but still  
there's some—the shoddy shacks become  
picturesque, a Christmas card, a trope

of bygone times. Most every one you see  
is falling down. "Used to be we'd cure  
t'bacca in there six weeks or more.  
Natural." —Now it's done with artificial heat,

a full-blast propane furnace, 48  
hours in prefab aluminum sheds,  
ugly and ordinary as mobile homes.  
So the barns that used to be the last

stop before the lilting auctioneer,  
that held a year of sweat and toil and hope  
in the golden leaves that hung inside—  
the barns built beam by beam, batten

over board, that have lasted longer than  
children of the hardscrabble farm folk  
who built them—those barns sit abandoned now,  
bleached by sun and rotted by rain, home

to blacksnake, feral pig, farm cats,  
jumbled cultivators, tines, harrows,  
rusting things that no one knows the name for,  
things and names all going to rust, and thence to dirt.