

Sandra Kolankiewicz

## Marriage

Unable to make a conjunction out  
of the disparate parts of sentences,  
we sometimes disassemble in the same  
way a factory unmakes itself, the  
coal no longer moving along on the  
conveyor belt to the furnace, the valves  
stuck so the joints leak in a dramatic  
way that seems unreal even from afar,  
the pipes splitting along their seams, dripping  
color in the red sunrise warning of  
the tempest that will arrive by evening,  
few options other than considering  
the worn and in need of repair above  
the solid foundation still holding its  
ground over all these years without slipping  
or crumbling, testimony to skill and  
engineering, patience and commitment.

## Today Is Not Yesterday

Today is not yesterday, for she is  
gone, the rest of us waiting out our turns,  
the unknown looming ahead of us as  
if we are standing in line to buy a  
ticket based on advertising. You say  
our mother will be waiting for us; I  
insist she's here now though we can't see her.  
She fixed the washing machine and lined up  
cans in the cupboard, made the bed out of  
tangled the sheets. She touches our heads when we  
cry, hums while we sleep, death a permanent  
state in which we are eternally loved.

## **A Pie in the Air**

I never do one thing at a time, a  
pie in the air, my hand on the phone, the  
unicycle tipping between falling  
and cruising, eggs simmering in salsa,  
the bird feeders waiting to be filled, the  
shelves on the refrigerator door just  
unloading themselves and wiping themselves  
down while I answer the bell, throw open  
the screen to the street and the dog going  
by, ignoring both me and the cat on  
its trip around the block, the man on its  
leash forgetting me too, for he lives at  
the halfway house down the way, has been told  
not to make eye contact with women or  
children, the library and primary school  
up the street quiet during this winter  
vacation that feels like spring break, all of  
them in front of screens instead of out here  
in the sun balancing the past with the  
present, hope with despair, privacy with  
community, regret with righteousness.

## When I Think of You Now

What I see when I think of you now is  
a walrus, a mound in the chair behind  
a desk, your drooping mustache hiding lips  
I cannot remember, tusks replaced by  
a cigarette you did not light because  
your wife was making you stop smoking, like  
some *odobenus rosmarus* with an  
old lady at home taking care of the  
calves, who wants you alive to help raise them,  
doesn't know she's on an ice berg with you,  
them, and me, the prey who wants merely to  
pass by on my way somewhere else but ran  
into you, master of the flow, bigger  
and faster and meaner than I who have  
nothing to defend but my life while you  
can be overthrown in a minute like  
some old professor with tenure who no  
longer delivers his lessons You aren't  
there yet, still have muscle under your fat  
though you are pinniped and limited  
by the world you've adapted to, which is  
not the world which was created, vibrissae  
whiskers attached to muscles, supplied with  
the blood and nerves that makes them extremely  
sensitive organs that can discern shapes,  
tell the difference between the shellfish you  
forage in the dark at the bottom of  
the bay and the rocks often mistaken  
for food by one without experience.  
Even with this skill and the sheer weight of  
professional credentials, even with  
the adoration of those who protect  
you, the efforts to keep you in place, you  
will still go extinct, follow the same way  
as one who never mated, forgotten.

## **Bike Riding and Kite Flying**

When it came time to let go, you were there,  
then and after at the hour and before,  
the zigging and zagging, the bump bump bump  
that makes up a life in the day and the  
night. The first time I flew a kite was at  
the beach, the osprey, fish in their talons,  
flying inland, headed toward the back bay  
beyond the wide highway, that first ride just  
as much about center of gravity  
as about the wind or the traffic lights,  
or the flowers at the end of the lane,  
one bloom opening, the next sagging, like  
the earth with only five billion years left  
till we're consumed in a super nova.