

Earthly Home

Sharon Chmielarz

after the poem "Adelstrop," Edward Thomas, 1878-1917

Yes, I remember the garden —
spaded by hand, seedlings started by hand.
Tomatoes and green peppers gorged on full sun
scenting rows familiar with hose and hoe.

Before anyone else was awake I was
making my breakfast from a row of carrots.
Beet leaves squatted in dew at my feet.
The air, savory from the volunteer dill.

August! a swatch of time, untidy, frilly,
straggly vines and stems, plumped-up-crazy-
rich tomatoes, and on and over dirt foot paths
hungry potato bugs, a garter snake, and bees.

Around the garden, a homemade fence.
On the west, neighbor Molstads' yard.
Past their apple tree and Railroad Avenue, then
train wheel rumble and the Missouri's shadowed hills.

To Put My Finger on It

Sharon Chmielarz

I once tried sketching the elm in our front yard.
(It guarded the driveway, you wouldn't have wanted
to crash into its trunk.) Lounging on our deck,
tablet in hand, I got lost in its branches,
uncountable roads of joints and junctures.

My paper elm was a destitute approximation.
Next I tried making an apple, oh, so much more
than red. My Crayola box – unable to assist.
And what if the apple had been capped in snow,
blue and gray morsels of tints, their light?

I gave up apples for clouds, letting my arm roll
into billowing. Is art about possession? admiration?
Constable's cumulus explosions, Turner's pale
yellow interiors, Constable's mist, Turner's steaminess?
They are so beyond my glance-fulls.

Sat and looked then. Clouds rarely speak
in first person singular. That one there
looks like a young woman mothering an old.
Others are more stage-y. Sets. Walk-ons. Lucky.
Sometimes hills step right up and into the clouds.

The Robin's Wife

Sharon Chmielarz

"Being alone is no way to be: thus loneliness is the test of pure being."

"Wicht" by Stanley Plumly, *Poetry*, June, 2019

She lives in the house beside a crabapple tree,
the tree she loves, a snow-caked crab tree.
Wind gusts through, and the white stuff
swirls from the boughs at the mercy of wind
and the many grays of February, the color
of listlessness and her husband's passing.
Morning's inhabited by silence, an estate
of cold. Beyond Cold. Sun-dogs out.
Movement making an appearance outside
her window is everything-there-a robin.
Plumped up orange breast is his buffer
and flag. The weight of him, lean bone
and feather. His tail shivers; it isn't a flit.
In a landscape offering extinction, intrepid
for him to call out. So they pass cold time.

The Old Woman in a Time of Aggression

Sharon Chmielarz

I do not want to end my days in a closet
of a room, my bed piled high with blankets
and a floor rug to keep warm.
But here I am. A neighbor of the kind sort
brings me gruel or tea from staples
she's stashed in her cupboard. My rescue
then is memory of the plentiful times,
plenty being little but more. And will
the relatives and friends around me, my
ghosts, be happy in my flimsy remembrances?
Flimsy times and flimsy houses in my head?
What if someone comes along and robs me,
and the last of the spuds I hid away, gone
from the drawer. With salt, my fine supper.
I'll chip some ice from the windowsill.
I'll make myself a cup of cold water.
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with a floor rug to keep me warm, my bed
piled high with blankets for my room.
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