

My Mother, My Father

They are long gone,
granite-slab dead in the Kansas earth,
yet every day they make their way
to my yard and house,
twelve hundred miles from their dust.

They do not straggle in on reminiscence,
nor coil on strings of I-remember-the-time

They do not travel by recollection,
nor to melodies fluting out of lost years

This old seed-giver, this egg-woman,
they do not rise as mist
from yesterday's fields.
They roll in today, this very minute,
dusting up the same dirt roads
they have always driven,

*Mom is so sad she wants
to be an invertebrate,
and Daddy sprints home from church—
two hundred yards, just to show
he can still do it at seventy-four,
skinny wool-suit legs birding
over sidewalks poured
when he was a boy,
all of them uneven now,
heaved like creek-ice by the roots
of settlers' catalpas and elms.*

*on the song Mom sings
as we leave May-Day baskets on porches
and hide in bushes—when I am six,
in the shadows of her first breakdown,
in the lilac-laden dusk
of our prairie town,*

*on the wild clarinet riffs
Daddy launches in the park
during summer band, his eyes
too cataract-clogged to read music,
his years too many to follow rules.*

*Mom at the wheel of her questions,
Daddy silent as he rides shotgun
on the strongbox that holds their lives,
the bullion they still deliver.*

JUSTIN HUNT