

## **Air**

**By Faith Shearin**

I have been dreaming of air:  
tight, vertical elevator air, hush of tablecloths  
and candles in Italian restaurants, flickering popcorn-scented air  
in movie theaters, the air that blew  
through Louis Armstrong's trumpet, the updrafts  
that once lifted the Wright Brother's first flyer on the sand dunes of my childhood island,  
hot, dusty air in my mother's  
attic where hat boxes are stacked on  
top of a phonograph, the healing alpine air prescribed for the tubercular on those  
sanatorium  
verandas of the past, dark, crushing air of the dust bowl when roosters  
crowed at noon, picnic air beneath  
spring trees, rinsed clean by leaves, the silvery  
air before a snowfall, blustery air that leans a sailboat against  
a horizon, the dark air in Pompeii  
on the day of the eruption, smoky parlor  
air of the Victorian house where  
my grandfather tossed the chocolates  
brought by my grandmother's other suitors into  
a raging fire. I have been remembering the failed  
theory of miasmas: poisonous odors wafting from marshes,  
swamplands, night. For the rest of my life I will be frightened by still, windowless  
crowded rooms. People come  
and go but the earth's air stays the same  
so, even now, we breathe the bones of pterodactyls, the looted tombs of pharaohs.