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 pterodactyils, the looted tombs of pharaohs.