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## Two Poems by Constance Campana

### Talking to My Mother

I am older than you were  
when you died—when I would lay  
on the floor in the hospital, my jacket  
a pillow, waiting for  
for my brother  
to tap my shoulder—

because then, it would be my turn,  
to sit by what was left of you—  
your warm hand, your  
breathing, deep and sparse.

I didn't know that years would pass  
before this last picture of you left.

But now you are walking everywhere, you  
are sitting at your desk writing letters, you are  
kneeling in your garden, a pile of weeds at your side.

I can smell you, and your cigarette smoke  
in the night in summer on the back stoop.  
I see the ember you flick form an arc into the grass  
and disappear. Teach me that, I remember asking.

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### Being Born to My Father

Into the desert a baby is born—  
what did I learn, what did I learn?

Some people are lost there—some  
never return.

If found alive,  
it is a long way back.

They must close their eyes  
for a long, long time—

Normal dark is not dark enough—  
they need rooms like caves and weighted cloth

—and all this for years, these years like night—  
I waited for years to look at light.

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identity. She grew up in Kentucky but after receiving her MFA from Brown University, has lived in Rhode Island and Massachusetts for the past 30 years.

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