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THREE POEMS

BY REBECCA WATKINS

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Trinity Test Site, New Mexico

Your barren land
 stretches
 past all vision
Squat junipers
 clutch the sand
 their darkened berries dance.

Rocks rise and mesas merge
 with the alkaline flatlands,
 white, like bleached sheets,
 their edges press into the asphalt.

Your ridges protrude like spines through skin
Your dry arroyos dip like the backs of knees

In the land of Jornada del Muerto, as the sun rose,
 Your sands swallowed
 Our blinding dawn.
 Your sky buffered
 The blistering kill,
 The roll of fire,
 The sleeves of smoke,

Throbbing over the mountains.

In Alamogordo La Virgin was waiting in her rose draped altar
For the flores and cantos to protect the poor

And the chiles were hanging along the porches drying,

Their bruised bodies swinging against the sun.

On the Tuesday She Turned 35

Her sister called to say, "There are
tumors the size of Granny Smiths
on the walls of my uterus."

He paused the movie that they were
watching and the actors caught
and held still, until she knew the scene
intimately. As she cried, he
rubbed two fingers up and down
her spine as if trying to smooth it out.

The next day as drove, she saw
ice burst from the palisades
In frozen waterfalls and the lights
along the street glowed like orange peels
in glass. She crossed the Hudson River
and wondered what lived there in the shadows
of floating ice. What blood moved
coolly through their hearts?

Reading to Helen

Helen looks like she could be dead when she answers the door
Skin dry and folded the color of nicotine

Her face peers from above her long arms and neck
A bird perched among skinny branches

Blue eyes turned inward -blind – like two fish gone belly up

In her apartment the walls are made of books
Loose pages fluttering around us

Like children's hands brushing our faces
Covered with the sound of edges moving

Helen collects dead flowers she presses each one into a year
Until the decade is frozen in her gin

This is how to make it smooth
She says and sips from her glass

Outside shovels scrape against the sidewalks
On the table is a photograph of her dead husband

Past the window the crush of snow
Once she told me there was someone she had loved more

Rebecca Watkins, originally from Cincinnati, moved to New York via New Mexico where she lived and worked on the Navajo Reservation and in the miniscule town of Gallup. She has been a volunteer, a youth mentor, an organic gardener, and yoga instructor. She received her BA in Telecommunications from Ball State University in Indiana, and is currently an MFA candidate at the City College of New York where she also teaches composition. She has been published in the *MT Cup Review*, *Whiskey Island*, and the *Red Mesa Review*, and has been a contributing writer for *XRay Magazine* and *The Gallup Journal*.