

[Home](#)

[Current Issue  
\(Winter/Spring 2008\)](#)

[Autumn 2007](#)

[Summer 2007](#)

[Spring 2007](#)

[Winter 2007](#)

[Autumn 2006](#)

[Summer 2006](#)

[Spring 2006](#)

[Winter 2006](#)

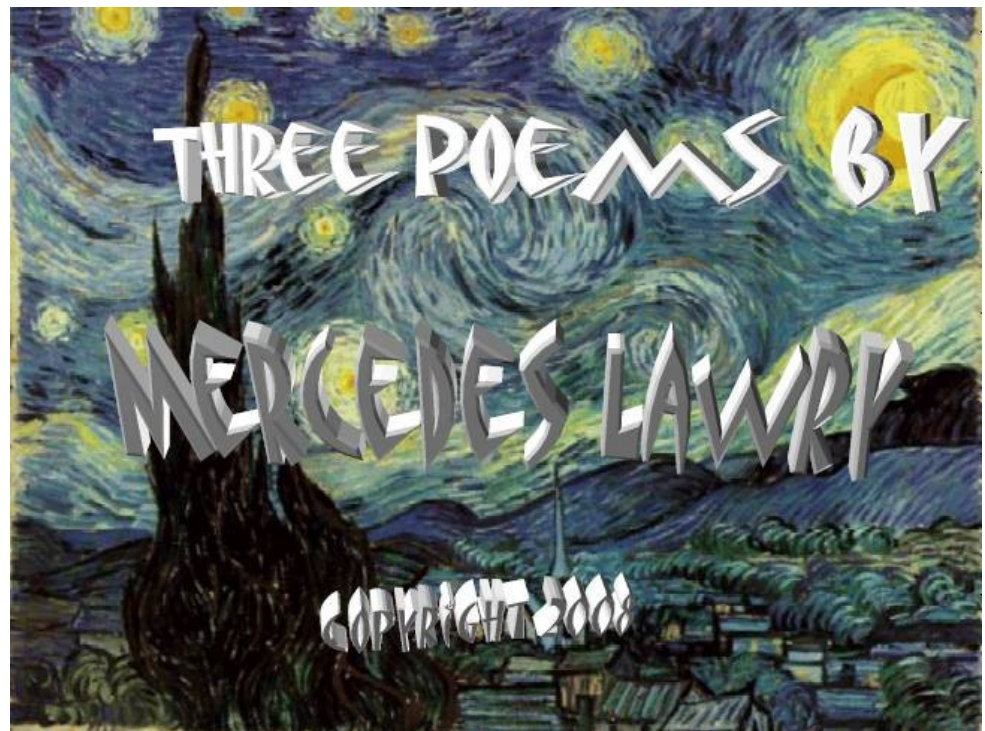
[Fall 2005](#)

[Summer 2005](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[SNR's Writers](#)



### **Who is Sleeping?**

The birds come off the wire.  
One at a time,  
their wings flutter and lift.  
They soar, each  
seeking its own arrow of wind.  
The damp air edges toward sour.

We fall asleep separately.  
Inescapable heat and restlessness.  
I flop over and back, curling  
and splayed, deeper into oblivion.  
I cannot bear your breathing, the grunts  
and shifts of weight.  
I lie here, straining to hear  
you across the hall. Are you  
there yet, free of the wire,  
swimming in the dreamy seas, sleek  
and unburdened, while my envy  
circles the dark rooms, stumbling,  
frantic, as the hours loosen and fall.

## Clutch Breathing

It's loud, this heart,  
this blood pump. Body  
in the small deadly shiver  
of panic. Throat taut,  
I wait, breathe, wait, breathe.  
Try to slow the galloping,  
but the punches follow  
like bullets. My grinding teeth  
pull the choked words  
under my tongue. I am inside  
the tightening, fighting  
collapse. Cognizant  
of each particle of atmospheric  
pressure, like a set of blocks piled  
on my chest. The weight of air.  
All disguised, this tidal fear threatens  
to swamp me. I clasp my hands,  
press each finger, one through five.

## Salvation and the Storm

At first, I wanted to run  
straight into the terrible green  
swallowing quickly, the sour clink  
against my teeth. To wrap  
myself in the deadness of the air.  
This was far from madness.  
This was the urge to save my life.

Outside, the bough of red camellias, tossing  
in the erratic wind, the light  
in the window across the road,  
the eternal crows. Where was time  
in all of this? Where was the thing  
I was losing?

---

**Copyright 2008, Mercedes Lawry.** © This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.

---

**Mercedes Lawry** has had her poetry published in *Poetry, Rhino, Nimrod, Poetry East, Seattle Review*, and others. Her chapbook, *There Are Crows in My Blood*, was published by Pudding House Press. Her fiction as well as stories and poems for children have also been published. She has received awards from the Seattle Arts Commission, Hugo House, and Artist Trust. And, she has been a Jack Straw Writer and held a residency at Hedgebrook. Currently she is the Director of Communications at the Museum of History & Industry.

