

War Bride

Helen Walker Jones

She pictures heavy boots, plodding through sand,
and wonders if the socks she knitted fit him.

In sundown-smoky Baghdad, her Marine digs trenches,
longing for double beds and salt-rimmed tequilas,
tallying his buddies in the Black Hawk crash toll,
sung homeward by old doughboys on bus benches.

His wife, on their Sanpete porch, stirs Shirley Temples with tiny umbrellas,
watches the sunrise beyond Temple Hill, her speculations turning brittle

as sculpted ice. She blots up ginger ale/grenadine stains with an unsteady hand,
her carmine-tinted mouth pressing lip smudges on the goblet's rim.

While her Lance Corporal dreams of his stateside bride, blonde Marybeth,
trailing the scent of roses down the slope of the Manti Temple's lawn,
owls haunt the wounded, helicopters circling incessantly till dawn's
mirage: pale spring frost rendering those boys alive, proving their breath.

HELEN WALKER JONES has been a Pushcart Prize nominee, a finalist in the Iowa Short Fiction Contest, and first-prize winner in the Utah Arts Council fiction competition. She was awarded DIALOGUE's fiction prize, and the Association for Mormon Letters short story award. Her work has appeared in Harper's, Wisconsin Review, Wittenberg Review, Gargoyle, Richmond Quarterly, Florida Review, Texas Review, Indiana Review, Chariton Review, Cimarron Review, Nebraska Review, and many other journals.