Thanksgiving in Kindergarten
Salt Lake City, Utah, 1996

Hilary Brown

We grew up in a city named for water we could not drink.
Our ancestors walked for miles to find
a home that would not burn so easily,
then stumbled on salt, which meant preservation.

In 1996 we walked to Westbrook Elementary
past neighborhood dogs named Lobo
and Lamanite music spilling from one-car garages,
brass trumpeting on the asphalt.

When the teacher gave us feathers to wear on Thanksgiving,
I didn’t know about the Mountain Meadows Massacre,
or Mormon militias marching, meaning to baptize
Shoshone lands with the salt of the earth.

My father taught me to keep
my hands open, facing sky, expecting light.
He collected miracles like shells
and placed them at my feet.

I didn’t know yet
this land was holy before we arrived.

I didn’t know—
water we couldn’t drink could still cleanse.
A burning bush without a prophet
could still heal.

HILARY BROWN {hilaryawbrown@gmail.com} was born in Salt Lake City
and is the oldest of six sisters. She graduated from Utah State University and is
a proud public school teacher in a border town, where she works in alternative
education and drop-out prevention. Her current project is a memoir written
in verse detailing her personal experiences with scrupulosity. Hilary lives in
Arizona with her husband, Neil, recently adopted baby daughter, and two dogs.