

## 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.

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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.