

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*HELEN LOSSE*

The featherless has no teeth, no backbone,  
no joints and no tail.

The featherless is boneless and toothless,  
or so it appears.

The featherless lives in mud,  
searches for honeycomb,

cavorts in chickweed, burns incense,  
drinks wine. Yes, he drinks wine.

Why not?  
Well, perhaps not, when he writes.

The featherless of which I speak,  
who's my creation, as opposed to God's,

enters a flowering meadow,  
where he drops to his knees.

The featherless feels the way  
any writer or poet may feel,

knocked in bellowing rejection  
by a story-telling editor,

who's probably shoeless at the time  
of his most negative decision-making.

We're not one and the same—  
the featherless and I. No,

the featherless did not see the snow fall  
during the silent night nor the mist

that covered what proved to be  
only a dusting, that I myself saw.

## VICARIOUS LIVING

Today I am living my poetry,  
just as Val—living with Ruth—lives her fiction,  
just as the fire burns in a wash tub

on the back porch. Never mind the house  
is a hundred years old, the little burner over ninety.  
Going to Pittsburgh is a dangerous move,

even without that cashier in Restaurant Depot  
who wrapped her head in tin foil, saying,  
"No aliens gonna' get my brainwaves today."

And I bet they didn't. I'm home living my poetry,  
while Val's telling the truth, in that photos  
are forthcoming but not of the fire. *Damn Republicans,*

*little is left of your message.* I can barely discern *ican*  
from the rest of your rubbish. Better not mess with  
the little engineer. She might sew you to her Aida cloth.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The man behind bars  
sees a woman  
jogging in place  
near a rose-covered trellis,

and inserting his hand  
into blossoming air,  
makes cup-shaped gestures  
toward female roundness.

## NIGHTMARE IN PURPLE

I fall down over the purple cliff  
by the purple river,  
lost and falling—falling deeply,  
falling into darkness, purple night,

deeper and deeper—from river to sea,  
from purple river-water into the sea,  
into the sea-water, now purple:  
purple—and lost in purple water,

deep, dark-purple water, where  
I'm going into the depths of the sea,  
dressed in purple—body drowning,  
in purple, in water,

in darkness.  
Body purple lost and drowned.  
“Full lungs, full lungs. Lungs full.”  
Full lungs cannot scream. *Cannot scream.*

I cannot scream that my lungs are drowned,  
have become purple, falling—  
lungs drowned, body drowned,  
body bloated & bloody—

body wearing purple.  
My body is bloody-purple. Lavender  
light now sick and swirling, the body  
vomits river-water, sea-water, purple-water.

Sun shine through an open window,  
the morning breeze touches the body  
sweating blood like Jesus,  
sweating in purple water—dazed, lost,

falling, puking  
on seaweed, water-bleached rocks.  
I cry out in in my own familiar voice,  
my body falling from the cliff,

*the body in question isn't mine,  
this body is not mine.*

## CONCERNING THE AMPUTEE

A certain man had a leg removed.  
That same man's in a coma now

in a hospital room with a single feather,  
lying unnoticed in its darkest corner.  
He a crocus, yellow and asleep:  
an albino rabbit, dozing in old snow.

Was this man hurt in the war?  
Will he awaken to let praises roll

from a bloated tongue,  
or die—straight from that coma—

now that the air has absorbed  
a vapid symbolism?