

Sharon Cameron

In Lieu of Letters

Two days a week I teach. I try
 To show them differences: we fumble on.
 Sometimes I feel the need to write to you;
 I fight it with the stern insistent pride
 It takes to silence students when they're wrong —
 I only sanction certain kinds of speech.

A month has passed. I do not write or speak
 Your name. No more to watch the tall men
 Winding their way home. Or to single out
 A step in the half light of evening
 Or startle at the shadows that lengthen by my side.

For an Unknown Child (1865-1866)

The epitaph read: "Little Byron Cutler,
 Died A Child." We took the stone
 In its grey awkward age and rocked it hard,
 Pushing with all our weight, prodding it free
 Until the stubborn earth gave way.
 That child would pity us if he could feel
 The peace that wrapped and held him still,
 That we had sought, through envy, to uncover.

All the Lost Adventurers My Peers

Scattered about me, on all sides, they lie,
 These friends who wilfully or without thought
 Have planned their own demise.
 Even those who see it cautiously approach
 Don't know that it will settle
 Imperceptible as dust
 In houses newly swept, permanent as fear.
 Knowledge won't help, nor pity here:
 I watch them fit their death masks to the skin.