

Autumn

Among the unforeseen
 the will is not enough.
 By the river the air rusts.
 These bright things
 lacking shapelessness,
 a brother who is dead
 a long time.

A swimmer slips
 against the rustling current,
 and for miles,
 the eye silts over.
 He enters through the skin.

In time the skin unfolds
 its crystal. Breath.
 The countable exclusions of the breath.
 The air winters
 north of here.

Kim Maltman.

Monday We Wash

Her curled paw swabbing the air with dangerous joy,
 three year old Molly, snowsuited and gloved,
 lumbers out of the car for school.
 Afterwards, I turn home to lug baskets of dirty winter
 already gray from overbleaching
 to the washerwoman, memory
 whose expert hands once more plunge and scrub,
 who soaps and plumps the jumbled trees,
 who flings and snaps the sky to blue.
 Her land leads north to fear
 through meadows whose tidy grass is marked
 by prints where bears have danced.

Jeanne Murray Walker.