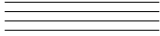


F O O T P R I N T S



R A C H E L H A D A S

Yaddo, early 1990s

Walking toward our respective studios,
two younger sisters, call them me and you,
each one accompanied by a ghost balloon.
Someone's lantern fell into the snow.
What could we do? What would you have done?
The storm had ended. When had it begun?
Farewells in plenty but not one hello.
Open the gate and let the winter in.

In the cold, the mirror turned to cloud.
Question and answer crammed into an hour:
try to reduce it to a single word.
Poetry lines the pantry shelves – waste paper?
Meanwhile we gather kindling in the wood,
an inexhaustible supply – but night
is falling. Something dark (a wolf? a dog?)
lopes past. Shut the gate.

Each of us was remembering someone's death.
Mourning: deceptive as a frozen lake,
snow on top and iron underneath.
We grope in sleep and dream while we're awake.
This is a dry snow. Finger it; it squeaks
like bats or phantoms caught in one gray net
festooned with words that someone sometime spoke
before departing. Snow blows through the gate.

Gargoyles, garlands – stony ornaments
outlast the seasons' circling promenade.
Generations came and worked and went,

but here is something that fresh fingers made,
reaching toward permanence – concerto, ode,
ways to snare the fugitive in flight.
Something brushed past us on the snowy road.
We turned to look – what was it? – but too late.