


RACHEL ROSE

Farm Song

The April hills are hung with alder breath.
Among the evergreens, each bare-limbed mauve breath mingles with my mother's breath.

She starts before it's light. She does not rest, working to keep pace with those budding groves, those April hills all hung with alder breath.

The farm dog follows, nipping at her dress.
The flatulent cows shift, steaming at the trough.
Their wet sighs mingle with my mother's breath.

She kicks the top clean off a deer mouse nest.
The dog whines for the mice cupped in her glove.
The April hills are smudged with alder breath.

She tosses baby mice into his mouth.
On two legs he catches them in joyous gulps. His ropes of panting slaver mingle with my mother's breath.

As both her hands vacate the broken nest.
Each mouse is blindly swallowed, sacrificed for bulbs.
Each April hill is hung with this: bereft mauve breath, ghosts of pollen, mingled with mother's breath.

Rachel Rose was awarded the 1997 Bronwen Wallace Memorial Prize for fiction. Her work has been published in numerous journals and magazines, including Fireweed, Arc, The Fiddlehead, Calyx, and Contemporary Verse 2. She lives in Montreal.

ERINA HARRIS

excerpt from “the 82 short poems of eliza” (a child born with blue skin)

poem xxxiii

In the light of sickle moon, a woman.
As she combs her daughter's hair.
Her fingers find their way among unruly strands, find their own image in shape, in tentative beauty, in the strength of the small blue hands the same as her own only smaller. And blue.

These little hands steal themselves back from mama, in the night and creep in at dawn to pull from a mother's sleeping a blue child's dreams.

Elliot decides mama pulls her whole life, this way and that as mama brushes a blue tangle tame.
She will ensure that her hair is never combed and rarely clean.

The light on mama's face speaks to this blue child says who'd have thought ... such a child and ... to think what becomes of us until the child is no longer here has left her hair behind.

Perhaps mama is still speaking to her, still stares at the promise: tiny fingers stained with the hope of blueberry & violet as Elliot stares out past the indifference of daisies, her head bobbing under the brush under the influence of beauty.

When she doesn't want you to see her Elliot just stands out in the fields, in front of the sky.
Watch the blue disappear into the blue in an instant.

Erina Harris is a writing living in Waterloo. Her work has appeared in numerous Canadian journals and magazines.