MARY BETH DELINE

Mutilation of the Body
(for Anna Mae Aquash)

There is a sky when you get there.
Big sky.
Big sky open with all the light
and breath
that you needed.
You can breathe there, and not worry
someone might be taping
your mouth shut
on the telephone.
You can spin around with all the
force of a cyclone
stirring up dust
unveiling
the earth
hiding the Black Hills.
You can spill your heart out
watch it roll down the hill—
run after it
whooping.

Anna Mae, all i can do
is write this out
now.
They chopped and splintered.
They hacked and chopped and splintered.
They cut off your hands that thought.
Men with axes around you
all your life.

This poem is about Anna Mae Aquash, an American Indian Movement policy settler found dead in 1976 with a bullet in the back of her head. The FBI chopped off her hands. She was finally buried in traditional Lakota fashion on March 12, 1976.

Mary Beth Deline is 18 years old. She is currently finishing high school in Kingston, Ontario. She has been published in the Kingston Whig Standard’s “Bedtime Story” column, and she has been featured on the Kingston Writers’ Radio Project.