

KATHERINE HAGOPIAN-BERRY

## *Cain*

*after Rising Cairn by Celeste Roberge*

It starts that way, hatred,  
cobbled from pain, sharp.  
You keep encountering it barefoot,  
in the grocery store, car wash, yard sale  
what was denied, taken, yours by birthright,  
this lamb, this lamp, this tent wall, carpet, this love.  
She weaves his name on all the towels, embroiders every meal  
with his favorite food.  
So it starts to pile up  
resentment, sediment, sedentary  
sometimes you just let it go right on building,  
stalactite tight with tension, the phone you keep silencing.  
You have two new messages. You can't talk right now, sorry,  
too busy, too late.  
Other times you explode, pyroclastic,  
that morning by the lake, son crying,  
fingers striking flint on his arm  
or even those truths we offer, fresh plattered,  
only to see them nibbled at, digested into homily—  
love your neighbor, your brother, your father and mother.  
Praise praise praise another stone.

Cain sounds like cairn, the way deserts hold death,  
sand too shallow, too forgiving for bones.  
We still leave stones on graves,  
favorite color, treasured memory  
in time merciful they will pass back into rivers,  
cut down, smoothed, hollowed for fingers  
or suited to be strung, marbled pearls, around a throat.  
Instead we cage these betrayals  
refuse to let them weather,  
serrated, keen,  
so low, it weighs us down.