

Reliquary

Moving day approaches
The accumulated things of the garage,
 the closets, the basement, under the bed
 even the back of my bottom drawer
Begin to clutter my thoughts too

And moving should be a cleansing ritual
A time to contemplate household objects,
 to purge those not worthy of boxes or bubble wrap,
Making of them an offering to the thrift store
 perhaps or the landfill

But some things I just can't throw away
 gaudy tole-painted Halloween decorations,
 old quilts too shabby it seems even for dogs,
Considering this trash, I entertain the thought
 that some dead ancestor has intervened

Someone who had a body and wants it back;
 perhaps only this kitsch remains from
A houseful of matter organized in the form of
porcelain saucers and cable-knit sweaters and
 a kitchen table of quarter-sawn oak

Someone animated by post-mortal information
A secret about what it means to
 put on this flesh, to exercise dominion
 over even the most inconsequential clod of dirt
A nothing that exerts its own gravitational pull

Or maybe the knowledge that her spirit
 also gave *this* matter life
Painted it by hand; displayed it every October for years
 this configuration not eligible for resurrection
Making me remember the incorruption to come

—Shawn P. Bailey

This poem won second place in the BYU Studies 2006 poetry contest.