

Learning to Fight

By Joshua Moore

My father never taught us,
said the only thing we should be *fighting* over,
was an education,
if we wanted to break spines
we could crack open a book.

We didn't raise any barroom brawlers,
my mother used to say,
if ever we chose to start
a fight, we could be sure
she'd finish it.

But, whoever told them,
Thou shalt not wrestle against flesh and blood.
clearly never caught an episode of
The A-Team,
or a scene from Monday Night Wrestlemania,
couldn't know,
that the proper placement of fist to hip,
can make a grown man turn a somersault.
How the sudden thrust of thigh off rope
can buoy the body over a ring.
How the subtlest shift in grip can
make an opponent sing out in submission.
Those shows, taught me the only moves
I knew to use that summer,
when those big kids
tried to pound us,
and my attempt at Mr. T.
left us bruised, and
pressed into those pricker bushes.

Let me begin again,
the first time I heard my parents fight,
I was twelve years old.
Huddled in front of
Wrestlemania's technicolor glow,
the clamor of my parents' voices
building to the decibel of a breaking storm.

Not that thunderous clamor of clapped hands,
for another of Hogan's aerial finishers,
more like the sudden crack and fissure
of a lightning bolt,
breaking over the banks of the Detroit river.
No one ever tells you
the body doesn't rebound, like
a wrestler off the moorings of a ring.
That the sudden crack of knuckle
against bone, can echo louder
than the thunder of any cheering crowd.
I can still see, that image of my father,
driving his fist, over, and over, and over.
As if the repetition could teach her something
she didn't already know.

Years later, when my mother finally left him,
and stood at that wavering edge of new beginning,
I asked her, *Why?*
Why, now?
To which she'd replied,
that she finally knew
what he'd really meant to teach her,
only wished,
it hadn't taken,
forty years,
to learn.

Orvieto

By Joanna Currey

In the morning I leave the door open
for the incoming breeze, sweetened
by bright peals of jasmine tumbling
from the doorway arch. Ancient stone city,
sentry on the road between Florence and Rome,
I want to run my hands over every block of it, cut
from the same volcanic tuff that thrusts it up
into the sky. This city, a place to rise.
From the wall I see the textured valley rolling out
to distant mountains: green hills full of farmhouses
with terracotta tiled roofs; green fields ribbed
with grape vines running north to south;
cypress, fir, and stone pine in postcard groves;
and reaching from the base of the wall out
to every unclaimed field—thousands of red poppies.
I walk down from the wall to get close to them,
to watch their spiked crowns waving and rub
their flimsy petals—to feel red poppies
for the first time, and realize I already know them
already love these poppies, poppies,
poppies blooming everywhere! Yes,
blooming on the Italian tongue
of the woman selling hand-painted teacups in the street;
blooming inside the Duomo—Jesus' dead gray body held
by his blue mother in the pink frescoed Pietà—
from his side one red poppy blooming; yes,
blooming even through the arch
in the jasmine-bright apartment,
right there in the flushed cheeks
of my little sisters, still asleep.