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A Process of Forgetting

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Victor Inzunza (*Literary Arts Editor from 2011*)

A Process of Forgetting

The wind belongs to the night,
it brings an aroma of perfume and winter through the streets.

Today's newspaper is lifted from a trashcan,
the wind guiding it down the sidewalk.
This same breeze wafts carbon monoxide
from an exhaust pipe into my nostrils.

Everyone's backs are facing me,
and the cold wind
from the East Bay stings my ears.

I stare into the empty lobby of a hotel,
all light and warmth for sale.
Its glossy leather couches, a
burgundy carpet—the color of wine,
unread magazines on an aging oak table.

I look away and continue walking,
nearly stumbling over a small boy,
a silent nod offered is a gesture of humility or courtesy;
you tell me.

There's something about the way all of us are marching
in the same direction that makes this seem nuanced,
as if this moment is free from the influence of monotony.

Our words are muffled; car horns intimate the sound of weeping,
and this hum of discontent has been resounding in the hearts of cities
long before I could even murmur a syllable.

Murmur, a word that means water,
which reminds me of steelhead trout flowing through a creek,
like souls in fugue.

A man plays *Take Five* on a Saxophone,
a clear vase at his feet is filled with dollar bills.

As the bell from the cable car rings,
I feel as if this is a set from a movie.
I watch a taxicab escape like a ghost down a long hallway.

The only one who approaches me is a man
in an olive drab field jacket, his face unshaven,
hair long and coiled around his cheekbones.
He smells like a war now thirty seven years old,
and I was born five years after his war had become a memory,
a word which means a process of forgetting.

