

## THE FEATHER

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*Hillary J. Gardner*

*“This is my plan: 4 sections, an eternity, an unraveling,  
an echoing and a deeper whence. . .”*

—Dr. P.

1.

I met a man who liked his *whences* soft  
in the hotel room, legs  
wide open against the snow and every where  
a quiet falling.

We two unraveled round each other  
once, falling faster than the snow,  
gathering up the other and rolling forward before  
our memories and past and careful selves  
caught up to us, before time came back

and pressed its dark face against the window.

2.

*I am a whence, he was a thence, she was a since.*

*There’s not much in life that happens easily—strangers  
—strangeless—lessons—going past...*

Going past the forest of ice—  
careful around the branches the clear dimension.

The frost—giving the field back its yellow—  
tongue of winter over the field—

icicles hanging off the signs on the interstate.

The v of birds...

3.

“The v of birds is still incredible—  
but you can’t watch it—  
because it just remains a v, it doesn’t  
change into a miracle. It just happens.”

*I have a friend who comes to me  
with a feather from a duck,  
possibly a wood-duck, I don’t know,*

*And she says,       The black and white  
careful flecks spreading out in bold  
and open hatchet marks exploding at the tip...*

*why write poetry?  
...or she may have said, I’ll never write  
anything as beautiful.*

4.

Somewhere I have, out there far from its original purpose,  
a secret that explains me, fallen off like the feather from the duck.