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Thumbprint on Estate Papers

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THUMBPRINT ON ESTATE PAPERS

in memory of Janet Davis (1933-1994)

A colabrown whorl I had to taste
on what are now your estate papers—
yes, you were eating chocolate

on a hot day. How like you
who spent the money Dad left
on what’s-his-name and all those gowns

still ballroom dancing in my closet.
At your funeral the aunts told how
you left the tractor rolling to chase a moth.

But I picture you riding high
rattling and shaking atop baler and rake
clanking over the scraggy ground.

You double clutch with bare dirty feet
your toes spreading to reach the pedals
jouncing on your patched jeans seat.

At the end of the pass I see you spin
the thin iron wheel with the cool delight
of a sportscar driver, half out of control,

swerving around, and then reeling true
to a plan so absurdly larger than you—
a perfect thumbprint from three miles up.