

SALLY ASHTON

from *Visitation*

The first time I heard Juanita: she wasn't the coyotes who squabble over garbage cans and stray cats at night. She wasn't something a raccoon was murdering. It was very late. I confess I mistook her voice. She was a curled piece of corrugated steel, rusted. She was a length of chain link fence twisted in a dry creek bed. She was not an airplane. She was not the neighbors arguing again though she herself is some sort of argument. The first time I heard Juanita I didn't know. I suspected. But not here, not in my backyard. Trumpet; confusion; a run to the window. Everything in me awake. Transfigured by silence that nothing else disturbed I said, I'm here. What are you? All that answered, absence.