Past and Present Tenses

(for J., after thirty years)

The moon’s weathered hieroglyphs enlarge with sunset as the speaker drones on. The outdoor graduation of our youngest, and the senses reach outward and back . . .

Across the stadium, spring leaves turn and drop and sprout green again; that red dress I wore against Wasatch peaks my first year at college flares in trees toward the field, and the old blue convertible of our first date streaks on a downhill road.

The moment—gold/green caps tossed high, school emblem lit on the slope—moves beyond the tentative to what we think of as set in the past. Those unmapped landscapes evolve without our knowing,

while the mind moves and removes to another section. Beside me you are gazing above the stands where seniors already move on to their graduate lives, the scattered salt of stars waiting for floodlights to dim.

—Dixie Partridge