

Moroni

If you bury a good book
will it come back to life
like a perennial?
Crack this book open
and watch the words fall out,
sowing themselves in your heart.

He has a different heart now,
different from the one
that cut its trails through his body
as if he were a prairie to be crossed,
different from the one that beat its toms
into the river of his people's blood.

He is a writer now. He wraps his words
in metal, scraping them through
his father's voice like a golden plow,
planting them in an empty nation.

If you hide a book will it
jump out and scare you?
He is a different man every day,
looking up from the hole where
he left himself and seeing no one.
He will walk who knows how long,
looking for soldiers on the horizon
as if for letters in a margin, until
a gust of loneliness cuts him
like a hollow tree into which
his bones will spill, white as pages.

And when he comes back an angel,
he will be a different man again,
but still good at hiding things.

—Michael Hicks

This poem won honorable mention in the
BYU Studies 2001 poetry contest.