Oracle

Gerald Stern

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Oracle

I have a blue chair; there is a blue rock and a weed in flower just before the hill begins in earnest. There is a little chorus somewhere down there and something that lost its voice a half century ago is starting up again; it was a tenor, it was a boy soprano, it lives by itself, it is disincarnate, it moves from C to C, and it is in a valley beside some mint, against a cherry. I sang my heart out. I learned to pipe early, I held my arms out, I buried one hand in another—so we could have something to do with our wrists, so we could expand our lungs at the same time, so we could warble, so we could last forever. Consider the basso profundo that sang as if he were a string, his voice expanded and shook, consider the alto. The hair on my face, the hormones in my heart, the flesh in my hand—this is how a soprano just disappeared and a hoarse baritone with a narrow range suddenly took her place. The sun in the desert going quickly down, the dark from nowhere, voices droning, voices shrieking, I am grateful.