



## Post-Mortem

**Heather Altfeld**

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While the rest of us mumble, look away, and generally avoid matters of consequence, poets seek no such cover. Indeed, Heather Altfeld and others of her inquisitive ilk lead the interrogation of a mad world. Winner of the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, in addition to the Poets at Work Prize for her collection *The Disappearing Theatre*, Altfeld teaches in the Comparative Religion and Humanities Department at California State University, Chico.

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*Shame is the first death.  
It finds you at four,  
drawing your name on the dining furniture.  
Sex is the second. It is the room  
in the house you never knew about, hidden  
behind the closet, beneath the floorboards,  
a party dim as a whisper  
until you pull back the wood  
and see the giant open-air market,  
with the flying monkeys and the fire throwers  
and the gaudy musicians and the trapeze  
you will climb and fall from, over and over,  
in a vaudeville of pleasure.  
Love is the third death, the great detour  
around the self, an improbable road  
straight up Everest that hobbles you in the knees  
and rolls you down, popping wheelies in the snow.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (March / April 2021)

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