TAYLOR GRAHAM
CLASS OF ’65

A motel pool. Reunion, after all
these years, brings us back to Old College town
and, waiting for the chips ‘n dip, you drown
instead. We, left behind again, recall
your pranks. Your sudden widow hugs a wall
of fortitude, but she’ll be heading down
the road tomorrow, home without the clown
who made her laugh. And so we scrawl
these fireworks beside the darkling pool:
it’s time to party, drink deep to the name
so newly added to departure’s roll
but in class photos, grinning just the same.

You used to judge an evening by its thirst,
and beat us all by diving in head-first.
Nothing is what it seems.
This child in Liberty’s skirts
and the boy in the bunting top hat,
who are they, really, by day-
light of a falling year?

That figure invisible except
for the slit of eyes—is she
in burkha or a bio-warfare suit?
And what of the witch, and
what of the cowboy?

Under every costume is a skull,
to every treat a trick.
A candle is a glowing thread
inside the waxy flesh that melts.
I walk beside you in disguise.

And who are you, this late
October night? and who
am I?
The mouse of famine gnaws at seeds scooped from the golden cheeks of squash, while November practices harsh weather. He lives in praise of harvest. Inside the pantry, he nibbles raisins blue and wrinkled as desiccated eyes; he dreams of sugared yams. It’s going to be fat today, and cozy. He sniffs at mushrooms destined for a wild rice stuffing, their outside cousins hunched, pelted with rain. Snug inside, he sings of roots and tubers, of nuts and sprouted grains against the hollow tooth. Just for today he’ll glut on trimmings, scraps and condiments, the heart and liver of a sacrificial bird with no notion of tomorrow’s hunger.