

To Fill the Hollows

by Gary Hardaway

They learned to fill the hollows with plaster
and sculpt in ghostly white last agonies
of citizens and, most famously, a small
writhing dog. A thousand casts were made
before they stopped out of regard
for fragile skeletons the plaster destroyed.

The ghosts haunted me at nine- stark white,
suffering, posed as they fell to Vesuvius-
after I read that National Geographic
in the library of Rheinhardt Elementary.

So many mouths were opened, as though
they screamed farewells to loved ones
or curses to the gods who had abandoned them,
as pyroclastic flows froze their time of death.

