

Study in Contrast

by Justin Hamm

Your mother said
our failure was written
into our histories
at birth
and we laughed
at her ignorance.

But tonight
while your finger
glides across
the glossy pages
of *Popular Science*
I hold a séance
for the Holy Spirit
in utter seriousness
among the book clutter
and crumpled manifestos
in the basement

and none of it
seems particularly funny.

Earlier at dinner
the gunshot syllables
we discovered
on our unwilling tongues
scattered crows above
the curling cornstalks
engaged in espionage
at the edge of the yard

in a scene from
the mind of van Gogh.

I thought it was
an omen
but you called it
cause and effect
and exhaled in frustration

and now
after you've scoffed
one more time
at my *feelings*

after I've mourned
once again over
your *thoughts*
there is only this: silence.

and the blue night lingers
and the coming sun hesitates—
both reconsidering perhaps
their mutual obligations
or else the permanence
of the definition
of permanence

