

*Michael Collier*

## Accidents Of Health

When I was young, the promise of health was that my window would change. At home my father assembled the Lionel train and in the private light of convalescence, my watching somehow brought the green track on my leg closer together. What I had was what wounded soldiers have—a purple trail leading to a purple heart.

When young, the promise of health always involved the heart, the breath's moist cries that smeared the window came from a sense of being trapped on a train that moved around the same circuit, the same leg, the pain that returned each time I watched television and the wars my father fought as a soldier.

And Mother who told me at the dentist's, *think of soldiers in their foxholes when the pain begins, or watch cars pull into the parking lot, try breaking your train of thought . . .* she possessed different things in her heart than Father. She cleaned the pus from my leg when I was young and always helped me move from window

to window when I'd want to follow my friends as they played soldiers, leaving their wounded in clumps or grabbing legs and pulling their buddies into a hedge's green heart, where dark communications centers trained their messages sophisticated as Tokyo Rose's on watching enemies across the street. Mother and Father

who never knew how painfully I watched in different countries as snow closed over tracks and trains left me behind, while in the snake of disappearing windows fogged with the steamy cries of soldiers going deep into their country's troubled hearts, I felt the change of any weather in my wounded leg.

When I was older, living alone, I cut my leg,  
again by accident, when an old window  
I was trying to replace shattered, slicing to the heart  
of my knee, and like the foxhole soldiers  
who hold their wounded parts without training,  
I pinched the gash as blood flecked my wristwatch.

As I held my bloody leg, a girl across the street watched  
from behind a window. She held a plastic train  
filled with soldiers. Something starts and stops in my heart.