

Object Permanence

JACOB NELSON

When the sheet is pulled over
your father's face is still there,
his mustache, too, for you to tug.

When later he shaves it
you cry and run—understand
the sharp edge of loss.

Delight now in the comedy
of return. Father disappears
momentarily, then reappears—

A boy wades in, turns over cold
stones in the stream to see what
wiggles. (put them back)

The salamander's tail in
the mayonnaise jar regenerates
not quite the same. (put it back)

When Luke vanishes through the wooden
slats of the platform you will know
a thing gone is always gone—

the doll, your first love, your first tooth (sharper
than what grew in its place), your balsa wood plane
on the roof, your classmate with the ovarian cyst, Tara, Gram, Uncle Ray