**Mid-December, Central California, Waiting for the Geminid Meteor Shower**

Fredric Hildebrand

Darkness spreads above the mountains

like a plume of oil. Cool wind draws

apart three-day clouds. Soon a carousel

of stars in the moonless sky-bowl, some

in formations we can name. Lying back

toward midnight on the truck hood,

we search for transient streaks of meteors.

The ticking engine as it cools. The smell

of cattle and rain-soaked hay. A coyote

yips in the distance.

Dew settles on our clothes. I rub the ridges

on the back of your hand.

Somewhere, the unseen asteroid dust.