**Newton’s Third Law**

Lorrie Ness

Stems bounce back,

fill my wake.

Flannel and wellies

carve my path through mayapples.

My forehead rests on the shovel’s handle,

a hole is a simple thing.

An absence. An appetite

scooped away. Plundered

by the spade.

Fullness

in negative.

Like a halo of water

betrays the plunge of a stone

through surface.

Then silence—

between heaving breaths.

Pouncing on the blade

like fox on vole.

Boring

into the marrow,

I am

a woman splitting earth.

Raping and birthing

in parallel.

My arc of hands, my open palm,

squeak on the handle. Calloused skin

is a balm and a pock

in tandem.

Below the break in the canopy,

I plant this tree,

fill the space between the elms.

The burlap peels away.

Roots dangle. Raw nerves,

seeking cover—

like the beating heart of mammal

beneath my leather skin.

With the root ball seated in the wound,

this excavation is burial anew.