

Spring 2017

## English Teacher

Prabakar T. Rajan

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## Prabakar T. Rajan

### English Teacher

Graying hair gathered in a bun--  
threadbare, ample-bosomed,  
dewlapped and bespectacled--  
hobbling the hot mile  
of dust-rutted, gutter-ribboned streets  
to our home each evening,  
cracked feet clutching worn flipflops,  
talcum powder staunching fluid flesh,  
greedy rattle of coffee cup,  
grunts between gulps,  
moustached satiety.  
On bicycled visits to her tiny house,  
three bare rooms  
and a picture of Jesus (brown  
ringlets, sunset eyes,  
barbed lamp for heart),  
she'd sacrifice her day's ration  
of two moldy biscuits for us,  
my little cousin and me,  
then kneel us down eyes closed  
and quaver the lord's prayer in Tamil.  
We made faces at her, giggling.

In the evening of life  
people do what evenings do--  
become invisible long  
before they disappear. Weeks passed  
before we noticed she wasn't coming--  
would now never come  
to afternoon tea.

What's left of any of us is phrases:  
dusty lanes' flipflopped hobble,  
soggy biscuit-crumbled palms,  
cracked prayer-burbled lips  
and a smell  
like all the long afternoons of childhood.