

## Picture, Cap and Gown

By Michael Lee Johnson

Cap and gown  
history major,  
minor in math  
graduation under  
the maple tree,  
bright red leaves,  
but the times don't show it;  
a full face grins.  
There's a shadow  
below your nose  
above your lips,  
it settles into  
a gray mixed day.  
You stand on farm land  
with no plow in hand  
or in the distance bare;  
no damn cows to be seen  
no red barn or damn homestead  
just open acres of space,  
and downed fences,  
and some idle brush  
blending with quill feathers  
flushed within a background  
of branches.  
Life is a simple picture.  
Life is a simple picture,  
repeating with tree shadows  
hovering around leaves.  
Dirt background is dances freely  
it is here memories are folded  
into prairie wind.  
You are still framed  
in solid black and white,  
you can't leave this space alone,  
from now to your own eternity,  
to your salvation or your grave.  
Your whole life now has spots  
and spaces behind it.  
Did you grow older and have children?  
Did you marry a man of the plow  
or that chemist you had the brief  
affair with in agricultural school?

Did the graduation certificate  
rolled up in your hand  
like a squashed turnip,  
donut, or dead sea scroll  
faded by moisture or sun  
wind cursed with sand?  
I pull down your life  
and frame it here  
like a staged curtain  
hand full of future,  
present, passed, and pasted  
in a space dimension of  
3" x 5" tucked beneath  
a simple footnote of time.

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