

THE NIGHT CLOTH

There is always the path back to the place you began, but this time, take another. You have been given the colors of a Vermeer, made in muted light. They are what twilight does to wheat and shadow. And then the man below you, in his apartment, does a kind of singing—as though he is making song with his fingers as they drum a tabletop. As soon as you name this color gold, it looks like ultramarine or even distant knapweed or even a part of the ocean. The dripping rain on the rooftop is now as random as the click of the second hand heard between the *shhh-shhh* of passing cars. But really, anyway, there's no *where were we*. The cars interrupt the darkness with their splashes of sudden, repeated white. There's a kind of rhythmic humming now from below, as though the voice, or several voices, run, again and again, into a wall, insistent, and the walls themselves are ticking—or is it the heater, or is it the rain. Something apparently wants to chant—will use anything to chant. And you—where do you think you're going.

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Sarah Maclay's poems, reviews and essays have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *FIELD*, *Ninth Letter*, *Hotel Amerika*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Pool*, *ZZYZYVA*, lyric and numerous other publications including *Poetry International*, where she serves as book review editor. Her debut full-length, *Whore*, won the Tampa Review Prize for Poetry, and she's received three Pushcart nominations. She currently teaches poetry at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and conducts workshops both privately and, periodically, at Beyond Baroque.

