

KATHRYN KIRKPATRICK

Vietnam, Again

And at the last moment, he
arrives, my father in his capable

body. Young again and strong, he
dismantles the plexiglass ceiling

over my head. We are of one accord
entirely. The long scar where he broke

his forearm twice vanishes. This is
a radical mending. We work practical.

We work sure. My plexiglass makes
him a boat. His ancestors buried beside

the North Sea raise their heads and know
him nautical. But he is not headed back there.

The boat's hull turns east, toward descendants
of his war. Life and death are borders

we have gotten beyond. Agent Orange, dioxin,
lasts generations. We are without trademarks.

We are more than transparent. Now that my
ceiling is gone, the walls fall easily. Beneath my

father's sternum, intact, supple, and fierce,
is a heart that takes to the task of righting.

KATHRYN KIRKPATRICK is Professor of English at Appalachian State University where she also serves as editor of the eco-journal *Cold Mountain Review*. She is the author of six collections of poetry, most recently two recipients of the NC Poetry Society's Brockman-Campbell award, *Our Held Animal Breath* (2012), and *Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful* (2014). Her poems have appeared in *Calyx*, *Cortland Review*, *The North American Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Southern Review*, *storySouth*, and other journals.