

By Allen Mendenhall

Hunting

The deer, leaned over, frightens
at the sound of the crack,
the broken stick beneath his hoofs
or the hunter's feet.

Wagging his tongue in the moonlight,
shaking his fist at the sky,
the hunter loses choice and chance.

A moment later
it would have been gunfire:
the sound
either unreal or untrue
that cannot be heard
except by the living.

A crisp cool tug of air,
like the long drag of a cigarette,
wisps across the earth, slaps him in his face,
reminds him
of the coming cancer.

He looks through the sights, down the barrel,
and fires at the nothing that's there
to kill the something that is,
the sum of his existence,
and ours:
hope and truth.

Allen Mendenhall is currently a graduate student in the Department of English at Auburn University, Auburn Alabama.