

Nicole Rubin

How to Fold a Paper Crane

Third Prize, Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

For Grannie Faye

*smooth the parchment of her face
and square it, fold in halves, press*

*cheek to cheek, kiss forehead to lips
run your thumbnail along the creases,*

*erase the stains of dirty light from her eyes,
collapse the triangles into square base,*

*wipe—breakfast from the frayed edges of her lips,
with the open side down, fold left and right points in*

*find the woman in the fold, reassure her in Yiddish
fold the top down, open up to petal fold, pull*

*her jaw closed, soothe her taut lips, apply lipstick
repeat, fold the side points to the centerline, tuck*

*the wisps of hair behind her ears, remember,
fold up, these will be her neck and tail,*

*fill the hollows of her cheeks with memory,
inverse the fold, if the creases begin to rip*

*rub lotion into the torn tissue paper of her
hands, fold the panels down, these are her wings*

*whisper her name into the brittle arch of her ear,
straighten out her twisted neck, fold a head,*

*close the petals of her eyelids, pull gently
on her wings, press your lips to the crane's belly*

breathe your life into her.