

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 8 | Issue 2

Article 30

January 2009

Red Delicious

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Recommended Citation

Bartley, Jackie (2009) "Red Delicious," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 8: Iss. 2, Article 30.
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol8/iss2/30>

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Bartley: Red Delicious

RED DELICIOUS

Jackie Bartley

Beside the road in a black encrusted snow bank,
an apple, dark and whole, its meat after weeks

of freeze and thaw probably mush and tasting
like water left in a glass for days by a sickbed,

nests in a remnant of snow that fell and fell,
muting earth beneath its white cowl.

So near the school-bus stop I imagine a child
must have dropped it while rushing to greet

friends or board the bus, abandoned it there
in haste or searched without finding it. Later,

the solid heft of it missing from backpack or sack.
The millisecond replay of its loss, like a drop

of blood vanishing in water. Or else it fell
unnoticed, seeding that later discovery of absence

with the crystal of doubt. Growing in the time
it took to look and then look again. How long

before, loss acknowledged, was desire shed,
the curtain closed on all contingency?

Some of us might try hard not to think of the apple,
or of the long burden of cause and effect.

While others, like you, perhaps, can shrug and say,
There was an apple, and then, it was lost.