

# SURROUND SOUND

**KATHARINE  
RAUK**

Harold had an orgasm every time  
he saw, or even thought about,  
a safety pin. His wife overlooked  
this idiosyncrasy because she found it saved her  
a lot of trouble, and even when the seizures began  
to lock Harold in their terrible embrace  
so he thrashed about the bedsheets like a rainbow trout  
baptized by air, she remained unmoved.

But one Thursday, when Harold reported  
that he'd received word—O  
holy word, word of low slung creeks laving rocks,  
word of blue bottle glass, phlox, and every empty  
straight backed chair, word of the wind's susurrations  
in grass and a feather poised on the lip  
of a cloche, word of 4am and its yardbird wings  
in the alley behind Hotel LaRue—yes, word

made manifest and sounding in his ear  
as clear as the sheen on Gabriel's horn, as sure  
as the microwave's beam mystically pierces  
the deepest recesses of a bean burrito—she decided  
enough was enough. The doctors informed Harold

that he had a tumor nestled in his temporal lobe  
and it must immediately be removed.  
Afterwards Harold would pass

his wife's sewing basket without a thrill,  
or cruise the third aisle of Rite Aid over lunch  
without even an itch of titillation, or hear the cardinal  
as just a cardinal and not a vowel bleeding secrets  
from the spare branches over the snow. And so  
they shuttered the pistachio-sized room in his brain  
where God, fiddling with the antennae on a shortwave radio  
was looping, "Come in... Come in... Come in..."