

## ON GRADUATING PRESCHOOL

—for Teacher Pam & Teacher Sonya

(by Sam Pierstorff)

The whole idea of leaving can make a child feel  
like he swallowed a pinecone or like balloons popping  
inside the peanut butter walls of his belly.

You may say it's too soon to be sad,  
too soon for a diploma made of *Play-Doh*  
and a gown glazed in glitter and glue

because you have forgotten the paper bag pigs  
with pink triangle ears, the vast blue oceans  
and their sandy shores sealed in plastic bottles.

But I can lie on my son's racecar bed and remember  
that every newspaper folded just right could fly,  
and an acorn in a cup was the only garden we knew.

It seems only yesterday when geometry meant  
it was time to circle around the teachers.  
There was always room in the boat for me.

But now, I am mostly on my couch  
with a novel in my lap. The afternoon sun  
is not the same friendly face it once was

and my backyard scooter leans like the letter *L*  
against the splintered fence. At least I think that's an *L*.  
I'm already forgetting my alphabet

and numbers slip away silently like socks in the wash.  
*This* is the beginning of old age, I tell myself,  
as I drive along the wandering streets of life

in the Chevy truck that I've always wanted  
with the big tires, grumbling muffler, and  
my 4-year-old son, Hakeem,

reclined in the car seat after his last playful day  
at preschool, kicking the glove compartment open  
and closed, and wondering where he'll go from here.