

MG Gainer¹

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Ascendency in Pittsburgh

Blasting inbound through the tunnel from another campus
 “you only got one shot you can’t miss your chance to blow”
Sixty miles of frozen roads and icy puddles
Sidewalk salt and road grit crunching underfoot
Three layers of clothes and a long black quilted coat
Into the high rise that was-a-hotel-now-it’s-a-campus
 Too hot
 Too large
 Too tall

Into the crush of the elevator crowd dragging a 20+ pound mobile office
on wheels
 Three fat required textbooks
 My computer
 Even a big stapler
Union badges on bag and on coat
I take up space
 Monstrously large and also pregnant beneath the layers of winter
wear
The suits shrink to the walls like roaches

¹ **MG Gainer**, Ph.D., lives in rural West Virginia again after 20 years slightly north in Pennsylvania. Living and teaching high school in the same county that she grew up in provides a strange juxtaposition of past and present. Having been on the picket line for higher education and now public education, she knows the work must continue if a strong, affordable education is to remain available to all students. It seems full circle to come back to the state where she was introduced to the labor movement by a puppet show about Mother Jones that visited her elementary school. She lives with her partner, two young children, elderly mother, and one stray dog that wouldn’t leave.