



2015 Society for Humanistic Anthropology Poetry Prize

First Place

BONNIE AUSLANDER

Dwellings of the World

All have roofs.

not the reed hut of the Beri

keep it open to the stars

All have walls.

not the thatched shelter of the Yagua

scent of dark earth wild lily

All have floors.

yes even this bit of earth our homeless neighbor squats on

weaving a nest of plastic and downed wire

Origins of the Mediterranean

There must have been a bucket.

There must have been water in a bucket.

There must have been a girl carrying water in a bucket

so wide the countries floated inside it

like fresh eggs poaching in a pan.

The yolks became cities as they hardened.

The whites that curled as they spread

turned to beaches of the finest sand.

Olive and mandarin trees the size of duchey's competed

to fill the gaps. Urchins,

prawns, whelks, and winkles started

out onshore, then tiptoed to that larger pond

when overcrowding got annoying. Next, the plow,

the wheel, the alphabet sailing forth

in biremes and triremes, pharaohs

who grew and plucked their beards,

Helen courted and killed over, Jerusalem

reconquered half a dozen times.

Men raised, then raided, the buildings

of the golden mean, the art of accountancy took wing,

trains came and left, yards and yards of them.

By now the girl needs both arms.
All good creation stories
have physics at their heart—
Atlas and the giant turtle straining
to hold the sky, Europa's hoof pressed
into soil. The girl heaves the bucket.
She might stumble.
This is how they will have come to be:
Marseilles and Malta, Cyprus and Rhodes,
Sardinia Ibiza Split Izmir Beirut.
She'll trip, it'll spill, she'll throw herself down—
vexed tears flowing east across her cheeks
composing a tideless inland sea.