

Kari Ann Easton

Prevarication

Oregon State Fair, August 1976

At the state fair I paid five dollars
to have my handwriting “read.”
The man in the booth had me copy
a sentence and sign my name,
then fed my sixteen-year-old
signature into a machine
I thought looked like a giant camera.
We wandered for five minutes,
bought a cloud of cotton candy
on a bright white paper cone,
and then returned to retrieve
a slip of paper with typing
that reminded me of a telegram
I found in my baby book,
an announcement my father sent to his sister
the day I was born—20 inches,
seven pounds, seven ounces, and “LOTS OF HAIR!”

The height of my capital letters
meant that I liked to stand out
in a crowd and the slant of my cursive
meant I was “willing to prevaricate to prove a point.”
I went home to the dictionary that night,
telegram in my pocket. Turned to the *p*'s.
Thought about how I told stories
and stretched them a bit, just to convince,
just to get the effect I hoped for.