Wordsmith  
by Susan Young

In my mind I call my father  
the pollyfilla\(^1\) king. I watch  
with something akin to awe  
as he begins the arduous\(^2\) process  
of filling in the gaps, the long-winded  
cracks that travel down the walls of my house  
like run-on sentences.

From the sidelines I watch as he trudges  
up and down the stairs, carrying  
with nonchalance an industrial-sized bucket,  
shiny spatula tucked into back pocket  
for easy access.

Over and over again  
with precision and grace  
he fills and smooths and sands  
as if filling in all of the empty crevices  
with the words he didn’t know how to say,  
the lost syllables and consonants springing up  
from the bucket, stubbornly announcing themselves  
home, until there is only smoothness,  
my fifty-eight-year-old house a perfect  
sentence.

The veritable\(^3\) sheen of its walls  
are due to this father of mine,  
whose love keeps him moving  
from room to room, brightly asking:

*Do you think you’ll be painting the other room  
upstairs sometime? I could start work on it now.  
Then it’ll be ready for painting.*

Yes, I say, *yes*  
my face aglow.

\(^1\) pollyfilla: a type of compound or paste used to fix cracks in walls and ceilings  
\(^2\) arduous: difficult, strenuous  
\(^3\) veritable: true, genuine