

Flames like people

by [Shanna Powlus Wheeler](#) in the [January 15, 2008](#) issue

Thank you, Morgan, preschool prodigy of likenesses.
I hadn't considered my propane heater
so closely, its hot imagery, how, as you declared that winter evening
in my kitchen, munching a chip two-handed
like a squirrel, the heater's line of flames looks like people.
And as your younger sister Ella whirled
in pink britches around the kitchen singing *flames like people*,
people dancing, and as you grinned
at your own brilliance and the brilliant line of half-blue half-orange folk
you culled up with spark of thought
and vapor of breath, I saw them too, figures swinging hips
with whippy fervor to the beat of ignition.

Born seeking likenesses, each of us. We secure a simile,
like the wild Ella scooped and wrapped
in her father's arms, let it burn to purer metaphor, let it cool
as we celebrate, as we praise our precocity.
Really, we praise the world, we delight in its many
wrought likenesses.