

# 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.