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to nobody, too

Ariel Berry

Western Michigan University

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to nobody, too

Ariel Berry
winner of the best creative writing
Ph.D. in Creative Writing
Department of English
Western Michigan University
ariel.e.berry@wmich.edu

i am reading poetry in the bathtub
again,
as if those cold sweet plums
or that red wheelbarrow
could take away the sharpness
of your absence
running through me
like thread through a needle
or a needle through my skin
—which is it?

i sense the element of blank
after loving you,
from what i’ve tasted of desire
she walks in beauty, like the night
and wakes to new periods
of pain—

then a formal feeling comes
and along with it age,
i have not been as others were
as the water adds time
to my hands
and softens the words i’m holding
i put my pretense away, but
the words remain,
walking a little behind me:

these come to me days and nights
and go from me again
the water grows cold
like the plums,
as i pretend to forget and smile
as i remember and am sad
and so i read poetry
in the bathtub
a coping mechanism,
a defense—
like an arched cat, threatened
with hairs on end.