

Amy McCann is the author of *Yes Thorn*, forthcoming from Tupelo Press in 2015. Her recent work has appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *West Branch*, and *Image*. Her poems here — personal and vivid — are representative of a Corporeal Mode within Theopoetic Poetry. McCann’s sensibilities bend toward an understanding of bodily experience, human interaction (be it inter-/intrapersonal, sexual, or violent), and the relationships individuals have to their context, personal histories, and affinities. In essence, McCann’s work underscores, praises, laments, and explores creatureliness in its complex variety, with a hand reaching toward the God in whose image she is — and, we see through her poems, we are — made. Her poems are striking in their ability to penetrate and describe, rich in syntax, form, and diction, and intensely honest in their bearing of the poet’s individuality; the poems boldly render her life in taut, exacting language, uninhibited by pretense or fear. Raised in Illinois, she now lives, writes, and teaches in Minneapolis.

Amor

Was it the street market in Monterrey –
the bonito’s eye, unlashed, a tarnished,

mercurial hatch? The ice beneath
the piled fish pinked. When you asked me

to pick which we’d eat, I shunned them.
Minus their chummed guts, each was

slender and clean. In that rank heat.
That lurid, commercial snarl. I downed

broth spiked with cacti, sucked honeycomb
until its amber drape threatened to fossil

my gawking maw. Foolish to think
it matters how I lost you. As if choosing

one carcass over another could alter
a future. I grew up cold-cocking sunnies

I’d palmed from the lake-braining them
against the dock with no intent for food,

just some unnamed grain of harm
within me, integral as salt. What organ

is it that balances a swimming fish? You
waved me over, your hand a vacant

invitation. Inside me, the flail
of discrepancies — how not choosing

becomes choosing not to, how any flex
in a mirror estranges the body. Even

alive, the eye's curve refuses to project
a wanted world above the real. I saw

nothing in the eye of that fish — no
face, no flash of diving light, no

net impending, no drag of rope
winched to the soaked deck. I saw no

entrance, but a breach — the way
breaking down a door means

you'll never truly get inside.
It was April. A Saturday. We were

hungry, far-flung, and strangely
alone, nowhere near the ocean.

Virgin Of The Milk

Not the white of starched
pleats parched by an iron,

not the clench of bleach, but
a white you can do things to.

White that thickens the throat,
offers nosefuls of clover.

Put everything white in
the same room, and you see

nothing's without tint. The tit,
crimped between milk teeth,

leaks traces of intake—
mild pucker of vinegar,

migraine lulled by a sallow
medicinal rinse. White always

arriving with complications,
a granular static, achingly

particulate as it swells
inward through linen sheers.

White accompaniment. White
unlatching, widespread

within, lapping and ductal—the idea
being expansion, cells divulging

maximum succulence to double
others, larding a little leg

until we coo, nibbling its divots.
Someone had to feed God,

offer him white ounces
from a nipple kept chapped

by his squalling need, the scored
flesh occasionally splitting to release

an inflection of blood. Slim, potent
distance between white and pure.

How cupped in a lap we get
so well fed.

At Cave Hill Cemetery

I have been in the graveyard
if not underneath. Magnolia seeds
force cardinal, seek egress from follicles.

October crocus lavender
as an apparition. Against such quiet,
feeling incurable—insufficient even for the washing.

For the mannered field. Approach
headstones from behind and each one's blank,
John-Doed, all loss erased—though I can't quite keep

peripheral the monuments,
their missing limbs. The petrified lambs
snoozing above the smallest plots. Light extracting

the final suggestion of crimson
from a false-rose bouquet. Our wish to stay whitely
hidden. Always our last word our own name.