

James Hearst Poetry Prize

DERICK EBERT

Persephone as Black Son

You wish you could follow me everywhere
 don't you? I used to stand in your room, in your shoes
 and prance. Some boys will be boys, differently.

Now I have earned the floorboards respect
 they won't snitch but slumber when I glide
 smoothly on their backs, like wax I race

from the top step, spilling to the door, then
 outside. I carry night on my head like a black hat
 mother says, not too late please

I'm her only boy to come home before the dark
 buries another sun. If she calls and no response
 across valleys and hills, through cities she will storm

to find me full of thunderous laughter. What did you think?
 See the ground cackles as well, then you blink and
 it's winter.

REBECCA FOUST

Overnight a Thicket

has sprung up, a goldfield tangle
 of new grass, tidy tips, poppies,
 lupine, fiddleneck, miner's lettuce,
 wild mustard, and shooting star
 that really looks like a shooting star
 or its cartoon version in neon
 magenta and plum, also owl's clover
 and of course the forget-me-nots

that remind me of the last days
 of carrying my child, heavy and swaying
 my hips while I walked, pollen
 dusting my thighs; each bloom
 a tiny planetary colony starched into orbit
 about a yellow sun—five pale blue dots
 like the earth seen from Voyager 1—
 fragile as a baby's fontanel
 and smaller than the pupil of my eye
 repeated a million blue times.

The roadside gutters are thronged
 with new life, cool green skeined through
 with wildflowers; beauty everywhere
 in this Marin spring drenched in rain
 ending a decade of drought, and
 eleven kids killed today, strangled
 by Saran in a rebel-held Syrian town.