

Michael Teig

The Hole We've Been Digging

Since I've come home, put on all my shoes
watched lawns, frankly green and unapologetic
lick up to rickety hedges, the neighborhood houses

come into focus, cautiously, like something dropped
from the sky, like memory, the narrow street
sleepless trees, the cars postered in leaves and pollen.

I've come home and the pond is back
in a slate suit, suit of hours. I dig in the yard
with a stick, stop at the grocery, handle produce.

My mother is older, more urgent, less assuring
as she tilts into the stove with a cigarette —
We're rarely as good at ourselves as we imagine

and this could go on for hours
while only the radiator has something to say.
It's always time for work here, about to rain.

In the street, people you don't know don't talk to you
though they say heaven is a place of great civility
where a statuette of diligence stands straight up

or some other virtue too mystifying to account for.
It seems the dead are there finishing our sentences
and you need a bruise or a handshake to enter.

I'd like to believe it entails not getting dressed
for a day or a week, the rain-soaked and bikini-clad,
the under-employed with a halo of bar-darts.

That it happens here, casual as undressing.
My companions come and go as they wish.
We lie down in the hole we've been digging

and it's a pleasure, really, alone or with a friend,
rarely looking at each other, thinking
you hear the screen-door, some recollected music,

the river and lumber trucks racing out of town.
The past is mostly just that:
I watch it all a bit strangely.

Thirty years ago on this street, my father drove me home
in a blue convertible, wondering like all parents
if he could simply keep me alive.