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Returning to North Dakota

Linnea Nelson

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Three Poems

Linnea Nelson

Runner-up for the 2023 Thomas McGrath Award in Poetry

Returning to North Dakota

today i packed our kitchen
so i would know
we no longer live here.

goodbye threshold
you carried me over
& splinter that snagged my veil.

goodbye toilet
i knelt beside after learning
of my father's cancer.

goodbye bedroom where you
& i lie sleepless & living
room where we said we *should go*.

i stand in our long driveway
& hold out my hand
waiting for some bright sign

of blessing to alight
but nothing touches me.
the metaphor is

not lost.
i agreed to this.
i agreed to leave. o God

of second thoughts & childhood
hometowns make me
somehow a stranger there.

let me be
the one sun-
flower in the field

whose face still
bends toward the wrong
part of the sky.