

ROB COOK

Death Notice

They interrogate the clouds
and the children of the clouds
who tell them none of their destinations.

They try to catch cherubs
with paperclips, and then by using tooth-
picks from any of the living restaurants.

They sneak the brokenness of great men
into their petitions for immortality,
which belongs only to misery and its few presidents.

The poets died a long time ago
and this is why they write poetry,
Robert W. Howington says

and then, with the face of Bukowski,
*if you're a poet, stop being one. Stop blaming
your misery on the blue sky and the yellow sun.*

The poet is a creeping form of apple cider.
The poet is built like the sound of a crayon.
The poet lies and begs his way to where he's already standing.

They copy each other with slush
but no water at the raindrop's core.
They covet and steal and plagiarize—

Even the killing of a spider
on the kitchen wall is a plagiarism,
even across the kitchen desert, even

the gradual wasting into weeds and shadow
spreading over oblivion. They'll ask you
to pay them for their death notices.

They'll ask if they can sleep inside your head.
The sunset another mouth in the wind,
imprecise, leaking, made mostly of eraser stains,

and no, not really there, no light at all
over the flowers and the mountains
and the seamless doggerel estates.