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The Ink Garden

Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville, Florida

I. *Wet*

To soar is to fall, the hawk said
to the lamp post where it perched. You stop
rowing the wings,

trusting heat to open its hand
beneath you--but you're distracted by a gash
in the sky below:

a lizard treading the air
from stalk to stone. In the water garden
of the museum

(a postage stamp stuck
to a postcard of lawn) that anolis rules
from his wee boulder.

He puffs the blood petal
at his throat. When he outgrows a skin,
he devours it.

To escape Death's talons,
he shed his tail. Another grew, less whippy,
but no matter--

the *empereur-philosophe* reigns.
He dreamed he was butterfly--or did dusty wings,
eyespot and all,

see themselves as chameleon?
The blood maples's lacy gloves flutter away,
singed by sun.

Dare a single mosquito
charge the footbridge with straight pin drawn?

II. *Dry*

The gravel said,
How many æons back were we next door
to the Atlas Mountains?
Continents drifted apart like families.
At the dawn of rail,

crews broke us up for track ballast.
Then they shunted
that golden age down a siding to rust.
They sold us off.

Crushed to peas for the landscaper,
sifted and graded,
the mountain came to the museum
of leftovers,

where the nothing dug up somewhere
is plonked on a pedestal.
Where on the roof of the loading dock
they installed a dry garden.

Which the gardener must clear just in case
a god is looking for a boulder
to slip into. There's an ocean to rake.
But first he asks the big stones

what they want. O to be islands!
He asks the camellias,
who don't look happy in their pots.
Does he ask what's underfoot?

We weren't always Salt and Pepper Gravel,
Aggregate size 3.
We are watered to the crispness of new money.
We comb into wavelets.

*The world is empty, the world is empty, lord,
It is empty of a self,
of anything that would seem close to a self.
Thus is the world empty.*

Debra Greger