

Innocence

Holly Welker

I confess I have invented a word
for the thing I am and the thing I have done.

It is a pleasant word and may be spoken
to young children or written in their books.

The confession this word stands for is appropriate
to some, embarrasses no one, and is almost never a sin.

The confession feels good for a long time, like polished
silver, and the word sounds like water poured in a cup.

The thing I have done and invented the word for
also feels good, like polished silver, but sounds like nothing.

Now I tell you what you expect: the word is a lie and,
unlike most lies, utterly useless.

If you know this word, if you have told this lie,
let us invent another word that contains no confession,

only long loopy vowels and layers of meaning
to linger on or lounge in.

HOLLY WELKER is pursuing a master of fine arts degree in creative writing at the University of Arizona, where she has taught composition and creative writing courses. Her poems have appeared in many journals and magazines, including The New Era and The Louisville Review, and will be forthcoming in The Black Warrior Review.