

Variation on a Love Letter

Holly Welker

I have written this letter to you before
and I will write this letter to you again.
In it I tell you that the days are starkly blue
and unbearably warm, that the cooling storms
of late July seem too far away,
or maybe I say that the cold nights are darkly comforting
as long as I am inside and warm.
Each time I have written this letter to you
I have held my pen still in the air
for just a minute and said to myself,
This is a new page.
I say, You can do a lot with a new page,
but you can't do everything.
Then the pen is down and the ink
flows out and down, like the last time,
like the next time.
In one letter you wrote to me
you said, Repetition with variation.
You said rhyme is repetition with variation.

When you go away, when you leave
and we have to write these letters,
it is so much easier not to hate them
when we both pretend they are poetry,
that they rhyme because
they are parallel, varied repetitions
of the same old envelopes,
stamped and addressed the same old way,
just as we pretend we are poetry,
that we rhyme because
lying in bed, we are parallel,
and when we get up, we vary the repetitions
of the same old hellos, same old I love yous,
same old good-byes.