

The Rain on Alan Avenue

How the Missionaries Came to Marion, Virginia, 1955

In that far year when I was a child
(you were not yet), I saw how rain
on long afternoons can chitter and chat,
gurgling and chortling out the downspout,
its sing-song tune boring a brat
with nothing to do.

That was the winter rain made us slip
and slop through mud, and noses drip,
till April drizzle made way for the sun.
The roadside rocks were slickered with light
and cherry trees rose out of the dark
chemised in white.

That year heaven made constant noise—
ice that sizzled in the pale beech leaves,
blackberry hail that rattled the roof,
the high fall wind (it made trees bow
till they licked the ground) with a whirring voice
repent, rejoice;

and boys in the street going two by two
wearing snow-white blooms *Good morning* said
to Sister Rain in the leaf-choked gutters,
Good morning, brother, to Mr. Brown
at the window pane who reversed his frown
and said, *How do.*

—J. S. Absher