

The White Dogs Of West Emerald Street

by John Riley

I wondered if Mr. Slane even knew
how many dogs he owned,
there were so many of them behind the locked gate,
tiny white dancers all with the same face,
and though they were yappy I wanted to hold one
or maybe two and feel them wiggle in my arms
although I knew there was no chance
we would be allowed beyond the gate.
Aunt Margaret had no time for them
as she waited for Mr. Slane to return home
to press her case,
holding the same pose she had held the day
she stood in her own grass
that grew thick because she nursed it
with so much more diligence
than any other family living
in the rentals on the street
was willing to do, waiting
to swing her broom to drive away
the ownerless, pregnant dog
that she called a shameless strumpet,
determined to send her packing
before the puppies were dropped
in the crawl space beneath the house
or even worse under the stoop.

