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# POETRY BY ANN E. MICHAEL

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## **Good Friday**

Forsythia had just begun blooming  
and, along the road, coltsfoot,  
yellow in the sunlight, and it was  
a clear day, the street was dry  
so there was nothing inevitable  
in the momentum of a small  
sedan traveling east on a back road.  
The driver—"it was only  
10 a.m., had she been drinking?"  
took that curve too fast,  
overcompensated the turn, braked  
too hard on the gravel embankment.  
Slid, rolled.

Jumped the shoulder,  
stopped by the trunk  
of a 20-year-old hickory which bears,  
now, a cambium-layer scar.

There—"where the bank is steep,  
rocky with that runoff stream  
splattering behind it and between  
pellets of bluish safety glass  
sifting through boulders"  
bloodroot opens its white blossoms,  
its leaves like crushed fists pierced  
through their centers by a stem.

## **Campbell Hall, NY: 1961**

Inside the white-steepled, cedar-shake church  
empty of congregants after Sunday communion,

I sat on the polished pew and swung my legs,  
my dress shoes too far from the floor to scuff.

My mother had gone home, across the driveway.  
I watched my father open the door to the ambry

and replace the folded vestments, satin, tasseled.  
A glass-doored cupboard held Communion vessels

gold in the gold light through the clerestories.  
I was thinking, probably, of strawberries

and powdered sugar and the pink stain on my pale blue dress.  
I was thinking, perhaps, of birds' nests

and whether or not the barn swallows in the steeple eaves  
had hatched out their new brood.

I was thinking so diligently I made no sound and,  
being small in the tall-backed pew, I was invisible.

I heard the scree and shudder of brass hinges,  
the heavy doors' baritone—amen—in closure.

Dust quivered silver in the still nave air: forgotten.

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## **Pastorale with Dishes**

Beneath Beethoven's Sixth  
I hear you in the kitchen,  
the klaxon of flatware  
as you sort knives from forks,  
shuttle spoons into their  
molded slot in the drawer.

I recognize the creaking  
of the glassware-cabinet door  
while cellos glide over  
another familiar phrase;  
I recognize my familiarity  
with those shelves, cups,  
plates and butter knives—

the routine we exercise daily  
between the breakfast oatmeal  
and the last light snapped out  
each night, the promises  
we try to keep as the commonplace  
collides with the exquisite—  
plates rattled in the cupboard,  
Beethoven's cuckoo calling, calling.

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## **March Snow**

The neighbor's sow got loose,  
made her way over the stone fence  
to root along the leafless thicket  
edging our meadow.

The last snow's fallen.  
The pig's chapped trotters  
look painful, raw;  
she leaves a trail of rounded Vs  
in the damp, white layer.

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We pity her bloodied feet.  
Her teats drag along icy stubble,  
she investigates cold mud.  
We deem her neglected;  
she eyes us without interest,

suspicious enough to spurn  
our calls and our apples.  
Evasive, she trundles  
along the rubble wall.

On our patio, the snow  
has already melted.  
She stands there a moment,  
peering at the cats:  
a white pig.

On sore feet she treads  
over rocks toward  
our neighbor's barn.  
Her tracks disappear in an hour,  
along with the last, late snow.

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**Ann E. Michael** is currently teaching English at DeSales University in Center Valley, PA. Her poems and prose have appeared in anthologies, magazines, newspapers and online sites. Her website is [www.annemichael.com](http://www.annemichael.com), where you can find information about her books and other publications.

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