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RIP

Shaina Monet
University of New Orleans

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RIP

Shaina Monet

Vassar Miller Poetry Award Honorable Mention

In the Haitian vodou tradition, it is believed by some that the souls of the newly dead slip into rivers and streams and remain there, under the water, for a year and a day. Then, lured by ritual prayer and song, the souls emerge from the water and the spirits are reborn. These reincarnated spirits go on to occupy trees, and, if you listen closely, you may hear their hushed whispers in the wind.

– Edwidge Danticat, “A Year and A Day”

Stacy knows the way things go around here
like vapor, heavy, hard to see. they will
extract their bodies, count from one to three

deduce the incident from the speedometer
and brake. they will not correct the mistakes
the newspaper article makes, or off

road next to the river tape the coroner’s
report to a stake with flowers. for
three hours her body bathes in water.

she’d lost her way back. in the passenger’s
seat, the child bobbed, a crushed doll, while the metal
clanks cooled in the flank. here, bodies will find

her. Stacy hears them call. the car seat came
down, undone, after all, turned her right side
up, out of the water. they’ll linger here

touch. remove her daughter. tire the casing
round the part made visible by the flood
light, dragging the river’s mouth. to find her

follow the cricket’s sticky click. in the
humid, thick Mississippi red earth, roof
crumples like crepe paper. Stacy knows

the way things go around here & there will
be none of that. after three hundred days
she counts sixty-five more, takes a deep breath.

salt water rips her awake. some figure
angels await. Stacy figures every
day you die, every day you'd wake.