

Speak

By Phillip B. Williams

A storm and so a gift.

Its swift approach

lifts gravel from the road.

A fence is flattened in

the course of the storm's

worse attempt at language —

thunder's umbrage. A tree

is torn apart,

blown upward through a bedroom

window. A boy winnows

through the pile

of shards for the sharpest parts

from the blown-apart

glass. He has

a bag that holds found edges

jagged as a stag's

horns or smooth as

a single pane smashed into

smaller panes that he sticks

his hand into

to make blood web across

his ache-less skin flexing

like fish gills

O-lipped for a scream

it cannot make.

He wants to feel

what his friends have felt,

the slant of fear on their faces

he could never

recreate, his body configured

without pain. When his skin's

pouting welts

don't rake a whimper

from his mouth, he runs

outside, arms up

for the storm, aluminum


baseball bat held out

to the sky

until lightning with an electric

tongue makes his viscera

luminescent;



the boy's first word for pain
is the light's
new word for home.

Source: *Poetry* (November 2013)