

TIMOTHY MCBRIDE
HONORABLE MENTION

Soudure

*Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.
—Andrew Marvell, "The Garden"*

In the Sahel, no village elders celebrate
the sudden, dune-shaped thunderheads that break
their year in two. Three months of meager rain.
Nine months with none. No festival or maypole rite
for millet shoots that rise from mealy sand.
No mother here weaves garlands into crowns
or kneels in gratitude to green rebirth.
No father consecrates the patient earth.
This is the "time of hunger," *la soudure*—
all surplus gone, the grain not yet half-grown.
This is the *space-between* you must endure
on nothing but the scorpion of need.
No marvels. The crop's quick flowers fade.
Survival is a slow, dark, hardening seed.