

Late Winter Fireworks

The fountain's concrete basin,
brimming with filthy snow,
suggests the cusp of a skull
exposed to archaeology.

Despite the inclement season
fireworks boom and bristle above
the pond. We've lost our parents
in the crowd of grim parishioners.

We lost them when they died
years ago, leaving us orphaned,
and again when the parking lots
filled with rusty old rattletraps

that hadn't run in many years.
We agree that the fireworks bloom
not to entertain but shock us
into clarity. Normal hours

don't apply. Normal seasons
would swallow their pride and dribble
into thaw. Not one reader of Blake
or Wordsworth in the crowd. Not

a voice we recognize. Scent of lilac,
artificial, sways us slightly.
We should separate, circle the pond,
and meet at the fried seafood stand.

If the shades of our ancestors prowl
these shores or bathe in purple gusts
of fireworks we're sure to find them.
In another place or moment

the fountain could be an open grave,
but the concrete basin's too heavy
for underground spirits to budge
so don't bother pawing the snow.

Just circle the pond clockwise
and I'll meet you in an hour.
The crowd shuffles along the beach
with a grim holiday outlook.

The fireworks pop and bang and splay
gushes of primitive colors,
any of which could immolate
even the bravest of desires.

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William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. His latest books are *City of Palms* (AA Press, 2012) and *June Snow Dance* (Good Samaritan Press, 2012). He has published three critical studies, including Robert Lowell's *Shifting Colors*. His fiction, essays, poetry, and reviews have appeared in many journals, including *Massachusetts Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Worcester Review*, *The Alembic*, *New England Quarterly*, *Harvard Review*, *Modern Philology*, *Antioch Review*, *Natural Bridge*.