

By Coby Mangum

The flood and the nicest thing ever said

steady falling from the sky
drops gather and collect to fill
steadily the space behind my home, the alley between
all the houses on every side here / I wonder
how are there so many walls?
the dirty drain defeated, the rain now pooling
crawling up the chairs or the charcoal grill
latching onto their legs like a toddler's tantrum
and like a baby crying, like anything that cries

steady dripping from above
in buckets to drive away the birds
and the butts are brought
to the surface, those memories floating
past weeds steady feeding
and past dampening cardboard -- then whirling
at the center of a tub, hypnotic

and I am taken back to the time:
the great flood of my youth

steady folding back the pages --
the calendar days of a schoolyear
stolen, all but lost. Learning less than prescribed
I witnessed wild damages to the poorest places
and was not prepared for leaving home
It was perhaps a punishment
for everyone
and for me in particular

and steady drizzling years went on
slowly and short on meaning
clumsily gathering and often

far from understanding, the rain slowly pooling
until one day upon waking
you find you are facing a flood / you're dirty
displaced, without belongings
far from everything, even what's just inside the walls