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Four Wishes

Marilyn Nelson

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FOUR WISHES

MARILYN NELSON

a.

Whoever thought of the phrase,

“Out on your ear,”

I'd like to go to his house,

and invite myself for dinner,

and stay till 2 a.m.

And when he started to yawn

and look pointedly at his watch

I'd grab his smoking jacket, him inside—

by the velvet lapels—

and toss him,

out of the door,

on his ear.

b.

I'd like to meet Franklin D. Roosevelt

in a barn in Idaho, hitching his wagon to a star,

(Mr. Hoover? I'd say,

and he'd shake his head, surprised)

and then when he introduced himself,

to say, ah, yes, the New Deal.

c.

If I grew smaller
I'd like to sit inside a slinky,
like a hula hoop.
I'd grap the top coil
with both hands
and pull it in an arch
over my head,
and then ride in it, down 500 stairs.

d.

I would like to fall asleep, running,
and run for 40 years.
I would dream of only colors, and wind,
and I would negotiate curbs
and trees and telephone poles
with uncanny accuracy.
And then one day you
would come the other way,
also running,
and I'd wake up
banging my face on your ribcage.