

The New Criterion

Poems

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Before

by [Molly McQuade](#)

Deep-set in a brown cusp,
seeds cringe from the stalk
and cling to the outstretched flower head,
stashed grudgingly.

Hardened, massy,
details seize: a coat sleeve,
sock cuff, will receive
these little-if-anythings.
Starlings shatter upswept

in another clasp.
The rustle of growing old,
before being born.

Molly McQuade recently co-judged the New Criterion Poetry Prize.

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