

# The New Criterion

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## On a box of rainbow sprinkles

by James Matthew Wilson

Last week, with Thomas out in the front yard,  
I pulled a little matchbox pack of sprinkles  
From my shirt pocket, shook it three times hard,

So he could hear the countless colors rattle,  
Then took his freshly scooped vanilla cone  
To cover all its mound in a bright mantle.

A melt of cream already dribbled down  
My fist, and so I hurried, tapping, tapping  
To spread the candy evenly around,

Thinking, I guess, how such a fleeting treat  
Would almost be worse than his getting nothing  
If that small radiance vanished in the heat.

But then, my finger slipped on the last pass  
And spilled out with a sound both swift and final  
The whole into a clump sunk down in grass.

Thomas took back his cone and licked away.  
I chucked the box, and thought no more of it,  
Presuming that, in the long heat of day,

The sugar ants, who spread their granulated  
Fiefdom everywhere under foot, would carry  
The sweet pile off till their dark young were sated.

But just this afternoon, when I came out  
To mow the lawn, which with the August sun

And rain grows thick in weaves of verdant sprout,

I happened to look down and see, among

The plump and arching seed heads, a little patch  
Of untouched brightness where it had been flung

By my mischance. Amid the flush and fruitful

Season, it seemed, not even ants, for all their  
Reputed diligence, come for their scoopful.

Nothing now has to be snatched up in greed,

The world being prodigal with dropping sweetness,  
Forgetting even memory of need.

And we are foolish, laying ourselves so bare

Before its generosity, but do so  
Anyway, being the motley fools we are.

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**James Matthew Wilson**'s most recent book of poems is *The Strangeness of the Good* (Angelico).

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