**The Artist at Thirty**

Andrew Beckner

I once watched a boy with a machete

behead a row of sunflowers carefully

planted along a fence line.

They were his father’s seeded heads

he sent, one after another, rolling.

How simple.

You called today to tell me the factory

is hiring because it pays better than

the university where I teach,

and because I’m your only son, and

because we do not circle love

without misunderstanding.

I’ll use the language of grease and gasoline,

the tongue you taught me to speak.

In your chest thumps a machine

that runs on what’s best—

a steady income, insurance, a 401k.

How can I forgive you?