**Barn Swallows**

Angela Williamson Emmert

The old people said if you killed one your barn would burn down

and my father believed

them or for his own reasons let

the birds build

their round nests in the light fixtures.

Emerging to feed at dusk on mosquitos, they swirled in the circles

cast by the yard light.

When his mother died, his sisters cleaned out her

cupboards, found liquor in the linen, under the sink.

She’d married against advice, called

what her husband did to her daughters

“bothering,” spoke

of the Old Country she’d never seen as if she expected

a return.

On the journey from barn to house, my father often paused

to watch as the swallows

snatching insects dipped low to clear the dark square

of the barn door and disappear within.