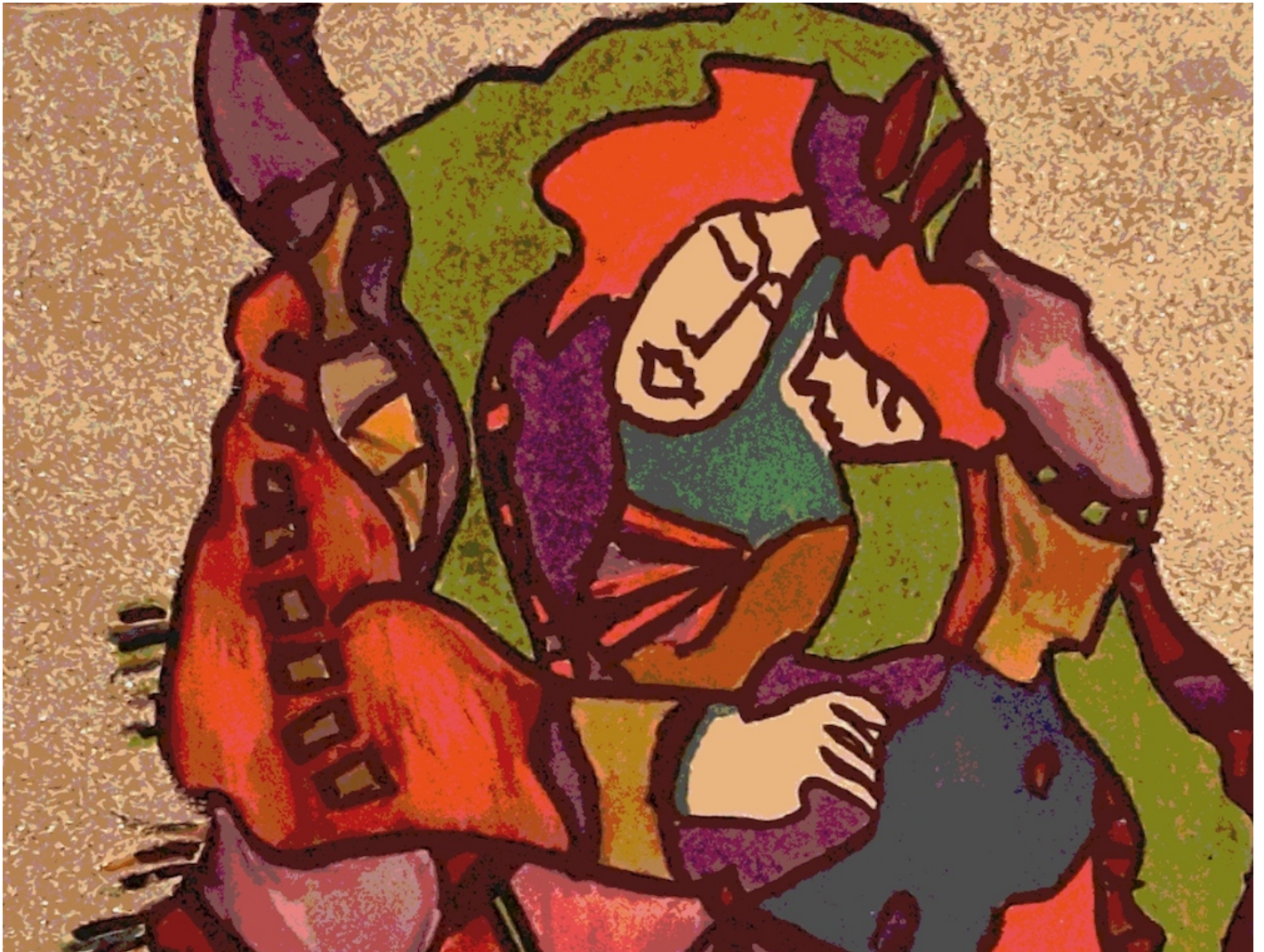


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Poem by Ellen McGrath Smith



On Repeat

As she got older, she gathered more bass
in her voice, as though life's harder hits

had instructed it to sound less hopeful,
less joyful, less girl. By early adolescence,

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her Yes sounded just like her *No* to me,
and I had to ask again just to confirm

what she'd meant. Another gift, I guess,
from the god of hearing loss, wrapped

in a gauze of unknowing, erasing the shape
of her intentions—giving her, on repeat,

the chance to change her mind, whatever
it was. Giving me the chance to wait

a little longer for her verdict. My child,
my judge, her mountain-range sentences.

Art Information

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Ellen McGrath Smith teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *American Poetry Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Quiddity*, *Cimarron*, and in several anthologies, including *Beauty Is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*. Her second chapbook, *Scatter, Feed*, was published by Seven Kitchens Press in 2014, and her book, *Nobody's Jackknife*, was published in 2015 by the West End Press.

For more information, visit [Ellen McGrath's website](#) [4] or follow her [@breezely1462](#) [5] on Twitter.

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