

"Moving On" is a striking poem of missing a deceased loved one and the determination to go forward in spite of this loss. The poem's mature voice, artistic pacing, and precise diction make it a winner.

Throughout the poem, nature is used as a symbol of both grief and recovery. The poem opens with the speaker announcing the decision "to move on / as I stare into the pond." The reader suspects that something is amiss with this statement. Interesting that the pond is one element that convinces the speaker that 'moving on' is an option, since water often signifies cleansing, recovery, and life.

In lines three through six, the speaker "stares into the pond" causing these effects:

barely noticing the droplets falling
from the tree above,
making ripples in the water.
Hypnotizing my thoughts.

The line breaks here lend a stately rhythm to the poem, and the more formal diction, "barely," "droplets," "ripples," and "Hypnotizing" reveal the poem's mature tone.

In the next two lines, the speaker discloses the loss and its effect: "how my great grandmother's death / still stands under the darkness of the trees." The description that this death "still stands" recognizes the speaker's ongoing loss and sorrow. The reference to "the darkness of the trees" is not only a captivating rhythmic phrase, but also aptly denotes the formality of pacing and language. After all, the speaker did not write "under the dark trees," which conveys a similar tone and setting, but misses the mark regarding rhythm and meaning of the longer phrase. Also, the word "darkness" conveys a larger sense of that quality.

The turn in the poem occurs in the next lines. We leave "the darkness" for the wind that "calls friendly names" and encourages the speaker "to be myself now." At the end, the speaker "[takes] a pencil from my book bag" and draws herself "moving forward" knowing "it is time to move on." The speaker maturely concludes that this 'moving on' is necessary.

This poem's strength in tone, maturity of voice, and pacing make "Moving On" a winner. The poet is not afraid to situate the reader in the poem's setting with specific detail, and also in the speaker's heart with understated emotion. Congratulations to this fine poet!

Thank you for the pleasure of reading your work!

Marie Kane, Final Judge
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2018