The Scar

George Bilgere

My son slipped on the ladder
to the pool and smacked his head.
Blood cauling on his small shoulders.
The doctor stitching him whole.

Three years on, after a haircut,
the scar still rises, a quarter moon
a woman will ask about
as they lie there one night,

her fingers in his hair,
her voice in his ear, the secret
delight of him—a bit
like burnt toast—in her nostrils
as she takes his strangeness

into her. What she won't know
is how the frail, Phidian skull
I held that day in my hands
resounded on the hot concrete.

It echoed all summer, less
like an egg cracking in a bowl,
or a world breaking, than the wild
beating of love against my heart.

Dear girl who will one day win him,
that part of the boy is mine.

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Former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins has called George Bilgere's work "a welcome breath of fresh, contemporary air in the house of American poetry." Bilgere has read his poems at the Library of Congress, the 92nd Street Y in New York, the Chautauqua Institute, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. NPR listeners know him from his many appearances on Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac* and *A Prairie Home Companion*. He has received grants and awards from the Pushcart Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Fulbright Foundation. He is a recipient of the May Swenson Poetry Award, the Society of Midland Authors Poetry Prize, the Ohioana Poetry Award, the Cleveland Arts Prize, and a Witter Bynner Fellowship through the Library of Congress. His work received the Editor's Choice Award from the *New Ohio Review* in 2022, and in 2023 he won the Reader's Choice Award from *Rattle*. His eighth collection of poetry, *Central Air*, was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in March, 2022. He teaches at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, where he lives with his wife and two exceptionally fine little boys. The whole family spends each summer in Berlin, Germany, a city they're all crazy about.