

Three Poems

by [Gale Acuff](#) (December 2022)



Expressionist Figures, Ludwig Meidner, 1930s

I don't want to die but then again how
can I say that if I'm not already
dead and experiencing it, I mean
death, that's what I asked at Sunday School and
my teacher answered *That's interesting,*
Gale, but I'm not sure I heard you right so
will you repeat the question so I said
Yes ma'am: How can I be so down on death
if I'm not dead right now or have been so
in the past but seem alive or still a
-live now and then she said *I'm not sure if*
that was your original question but
I will say that if you're dead now you can't
ask anything at all. Then she smiled
and now I want to kill myself again.

Nobody wants to fall in love with me
but in a parallel universe I
beat lovers off with a stick, well, not *beat*
them exactly, sort of warn them away
because I love my Sunday School teacher
in that universe or dimension and
that one's my imagination and this
one's reality just a bit more real
than the other and after Sunday School
I proposed to her though she's 25
to my 10, this universe is fifteen
years different from the other, the other
is perfect and this one ain't and yet it's
perfect enough to be the only one
that's worth a damn. In both we broke my heart.

It's either Heaven or Hell when you're dead
they tell us ten-year-olds at Sunday School
and the adults and us at church service
again, still I long for a third place but
my teacher says that I'm there already,
Earth is what it is but I say *What I*
mean is when I die but she says *No, Dear,*
there is no third as you'll find out once you're
there on the other side so I just say
Yes ma'am, don't ask me how she knows for sure
since all she'll say is that she's got the strength
of her faith but so do I, what difference
is there then unless it's that all of us
have died already and we're here now but
even so we'll die once more. I hope so.

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Gale Acuff has had hundreds of poems published in a dozen countries and has authored three books of poetry. His poems have appeared in *Ascent*, *Reed*, *Arkansas Review*, *Poem*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Florida Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Roanoke Review*, *Ohio Journal*, *Sou'wester*, *South Dakota Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and many other magazines and journals. He has taught tertiary English courses in several countries and is presently teaching at Arab American University in Jenin, Palestine.

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