

**CLARE ROSSINI**  
**These Passing Venial Wonders**

Let us speak of the summer night,  
Warm as a wave on one of the midwest's dying lakes,

So that the sign, tubed and red in the window of Nicky's Gas 'n Goods—  
*Open—*

Sinks into my eye as I drive by, tripping the neural  
Goat-paths to the brain.

As the car speeds on toward the town's  
Ragged perimeter, where corn, husk-prim, full of itself, noses up

Toward the spare-change moon,  
Some nook of my gray matter opens, spews a rememberer's feast

Of Nicky's cornucopic shelves, the stern boxed mixes  
(Cakes in waiting, helpers of meat)

Side-by-side with tin-colored bags of snacks, some twisted and looped,  
Knobby with salt, others

Cast into rounds so consistent  
A god might look askance on creatures whose ambitions divine

Such deep-fried geometries, while in their refrigerated keep,  
Bottles of juice bead with dew, their labels conjuring

No less than utopia, tropical isles, or in the case of the cola *Vavoom*  
The power released when that same dubious god

Tossed the universe out and, as if to a many-petalled peony, said  
*Open—*

Meanwhile, back at Nick's, the cashier-boy checks his watch. Time  
To lock the till, sweep the floor, and

(He's a god, too) flick off the forests  
Of fluorescents, the boxes and cans all at once winked out, the  
tropical isles

Going dark,  
And dark, the utopias.