

# Contrails

*D.R. James*



Photograph by Colleen McLaughlin. "Contrails" was written by D.R. James for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, December 2015, and selected by Timothy Green as the Editor's Choice winner.

One answer lies in the tropospheric molecules scattering  
short blue waves and vapor meeting minus-sixty. But  
  
what's the burning question? What orders the eye, the  
brain, to catch all the colors after rain? What comprehends  
  
a handful of sand, November's endless branches of birds?  
I'm bowed down by the simply phenomenal, the asymmetric  
  
stain of mulberry crushed on concrete, what was sown that  
now reveals its long green line. Yesterday, mountainous  
  
clouds turned our Midwest horizon into I-76's Wiggins's  
vision of the Colorado Rockies, and any headfirst plunge  
  
off my cautious stage in this life supplies the slickest look  
at all I never see. Forget insipid interpretations, how the jet  
  
streaking seven miles above your sweetheart blazes the trail  
connecting her to you. In a blink, or maybe in a day, those  
  
contrails, heavy as the thin air they cleave, will leave you,  
expanding, disbandingly unparalleled into a marbled blue.

