

# 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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