

This Old Church

St. Hedwig's Parish, South Bend, IN

When I was young the weavers told me
they hid mistakes
in every rug they made,

so I would search their work,
pile after pile,
until I found those flaws:

a yellow thread among the green,
a row deformed,
and once, impossibly, a hole.

“Only God is perfect,” one weaver said,
and she taught me
to know the imperfection

of everything,
like this old church
where my eyes are drawn

to the inconsistent geometry
of the ceiling,
or the broken trim,

or the one missing candle
behind the cross.
For all the splendor here

and perfect shades of blue,
these winding cracks
distract my prayers,

and yet the weavers said that God once came
to watch them work
and loved one rug so much

he brought it back to heaven
where it still sits
before the holy throne.

Perhaps God likes mistakes, I thought,

or does not mind,
or perhaps each error weaves its way

to some quiet, holy place
where God will walk,
a God who's used to human things.