

Simmering Gumbo

*Gumbo was born in the New World and took
cues from the old but adapted to the new.*

--Cynthia Lejeune Nobles

Cooking down roux, to show I can change,
I substitute butter for my Grandma's lard

from hogs Grandpa slaughtered in late
November on the full moon, knowing while

the moon waned meat would shrink with
too much fat. I also try repeating *retirement*

until it leaves me indifferent, but acceptance
is not the same as peace. Spinning around

as if I'm a revolving door, I wonder if circular
motion means movement or if I'm a hamster

on a wheel. In Thai culture, nine is a number
of renewal, of letting go. To begin again,

have ill luck washed off, let good fortune in,
let nine of anything living go. The key word

here is *living*. I doubt using celery, onions,
bell peppers on the cusp of going bad counts.

What can I offer? Like mixing up gumbo
in a pot, I try to cobble my days piecemeal,

be grateful for what the world gives, not
what has been taken away. If I can last until

late September when monarchs migrate, one
might land on me if I spread my arms seeking

a sign of hope, of change. If black and orange wings
flutter, can I wait long enough for one to light,

staying motionless like a blue heron, neck extended,
standing in the cove on one leg to spear a fish?