

# Kevin McGowin

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## Ruins of Shacks

To begin, they were porous  
to the wind, and their dirt floors  
exhumed inch worms after a rain  
just as any soil would be obliged

to do. I never actually knew  
anybody who actually *lived* in one—  
they've moved on, they're dead, they're  
free. Time makes the most

of what earth has to offer:  
a weathered board, shuffling on the wind,  
of armies of shrubs piercing fences at  
night, and covering the remains

with the trappings of the quick and the dead.  
They used to pick cotton on this land,  
and plow the fallow fields for summer;  
they used to bake slow in the blackening sun

that old star with only so long left to live.  
A hundred years ago it was, or a little more  
perhaps: perhaps. And trees disrobe in autumn.  
The soil sinks inchward by the year. And that's

what we forget: the soil, the soil.  
The trees that outlive every southern spring.