

THE BERRY BUSH

there is this berry bush out back
it doesn't look like much
a hulk of leaves & branches
berries & flowers
purple berries, white flowers.

the flowers look like popcorn &
they seem to have appeared overnight.

shortly after the flowers came
the birds came
about fifty oversize robins
pretending it's spring here
when it's only February.

the birds have taken over
& after assaulting the berries
they strut across rooftops
their salmon chests bloated
& sun warmed.

they seem to be waiting for something
lined up on the back fence
or in formation on the roof.

my cat doesn't know quite
what to make of them
he's a little too young yet
but he studies them carefully
lying out back on his belly
low crawling thru the dirt
making these clicking noises
with his mouth

waiting for understanding
for some blood sent command.

FATHERS & SONS

the last time I was home it was
pretty bad & we never got around
to talking much
or relaxing with each other
I mean it was his turf &
we were a lot like a couple
of dogs in the park
pissing on trees & bushes
& setting up boundaries
& what with my long hair
& mustache & poems he

seemed to view me as
something other than son
like maybe I wasn't the
howdy doody look alike he
taught to fight & play ball
maybe I was some kind of
sissy or fruit
& when the relatives came
to observe this curiosity
& my polish aunt asked me
to read some poems
the final perimeter was
pissed upon & we stood there
facing off & growling inside
steamfitter & poet
father & son
both of us caught up in it
a couple of privates in a
war waged through centuries
a war we neither understood
nor wanted.

MOTHER

it's not that I never liked her
that isn't exactly true
she just wasn't very
important to me
or at least not as important
as she thought she should be
& there was always that
disapproving gaze
that well I don't know
you suit yourself I'm
only your mother
& always searching for defects
in her creation
like when I was really little
the times when I'd feel her
studying my face
& then hold still a minute
& then she'd lick her finger
the way she did when
turning pages in a book
& then I told you
to hold still
& then the wet finger
on my face
rubbing away at a
speck of dirt
that smelly wet forefinger
sculpting my face.