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.