

## Three Poems · *Pat Mangan*

### THE HARNESS

All right mister she says    all buckled  
her good boy good dog    in the doggie harness  
she had made for him    real leather  
with the brass rivets see    it goes around him  
across his shoulders    under the tummy  
but not too tight    because he is walking  
just everywhere    getting into things  
and to which now she fastens    a length of rope  
and then to the clothesline    All right mister  
going for a walk    and he loves it  
gets right up    under the fat clouds  
the green trees    everything's waiting  
as she gives him a kiss    a slight push  
for direction    down the line  
the garage    where the birds are nesting  
and turns away    and never looks back  
never hears the rope hissing    above his head  
or the short squeals    the ecstatic panting  
all morning    throwing himself into play

### THE BEAR

Who would burn a bear    with cigarettes  
and yet they did    over and over  
at the city park    under the cottonwoods  
brown bear with    much of its fur missing  
next to the bandstand    it didn't know to go  
to the center of its cage    it kept pacing  
the way they do    rubbing itself  
against the bars    shuffle turn  
shuffle back    the small flames I imagined

clinging to its fur    were my own first matches  
over the toilet bowl    wooden soldiers  
with their red caps first    then black I loved  
the flash and fizzle    flushing them down  
afterwards but no one    heard the bear  
maybe it didn't scream    old anyway  
missing its teeth    and came to see  
so they went right on    when we heard the explosion  
we were still eating Well    my father said  
they've shot the bear    one hand on his water glass  
the big fingers opening    and closing  
in the silence    rays of dazzling light

## DANDELIONS

Dandelions    the first flowers I remember  
and after the trap door    leading to the cellar  
where preserves were stored    in blue-green jars  
the worst on her back    she had to bend over  
to get under their roots    calling them weeds  
spooning viciously or    with a kitchen knife  
dig down    she grunted like a pig  
she ravished the lawn    once she got started  
dirt leaves stones    everything flew out  
I saw marbles I had thought lost    unearthed  
bits of colored glass    crockery worms  
once even a garter snake    hacked up  
then try to join itself    I trailed along  
begging her Slow down slow down    your back momma  
but she kept right on    the loose skirts hiked  
above her knees    hair wild  
her red face    streaked with mud  
not one of them remained    when she was done  
and sat weeping    clutching her back  
And what are you looking at    she said can't I cry