

## Two Poems · *Jack Gilbert*

### GIFT HORSES

He lives in the barrens, in dying neighborhoods  
and negligible countries. None with an address.  
But still the Devil finds him. Kills the wife  
or spoils the marriage. Publishes each place  
and makes it popular, makes it better, makes it  
unusable. Brings news of friends, all defeated,  
most sick or sad without reasons. Shows him  
photographs of the beautiful women in old movies  
whose luminous faces sixteen feet tall looked out  
at the boy in the dark where he grew his heart.  
Brings pictures of what they look like now.  
Says how lively they are, and brave despite their age.  
Taking away everything. For the Devil is commissioned  
to harm, to keelhaul us with loss, with knowledge  
of how all things splendid are disfigured by small  
and small. Yet he allows us to eat roast goat  
on the mountain above Parakia. Lets us stumble  
for the first time, unprepared, onto the buildings  
of Palladio in moonlight. Maybe because he is not  
good at his job. I believe he loves us against  
his will. Because of the women and how the men  
struggle to hear inside them. Because we construe  
something important from trees and locomotives,  
smell weeds in a hot July afternoon and are augmented.