

## Two Poems · *Arthur Smith*

### IN THE ABSENCE OF LOVE, THERE ARE ENGINES

That first night gone, I was struck  
Most by the noises that emerged—  
The alarm clock whirring

Dawnward in its greased gears,  
Cicadas whirling ratchets in the trees,  
The simmering approach

Of a car  
Wheeling downtown  
Over the dew-lathered asphalt.

The neighbor's mongrel  
Woofed and snuffled in a circle,  
And then barked

Toward the distant skyscrapers,  
The cells, almost all of them, blazing and empty.  
I, too, felt that reverberation,

That churning so indifferently relentless  
It seemed the earth churned with it,  
Or because of it,

And even then, I think, I sensed  
That without her breathing in sleep  
Beside me, this was the permanence

I would turn to, shuddering,  
Through the years, less and less in anger  
Than relief.