

## Two Poems · *Mark Halperin*

### ORPHANS

In Tallinn, in a small town in Pennsylvania,  
in Matsue the lives I cast off like clothes  
lie in casual heaps beside the still warm beds.

I went on somewhere else, here, but the life  
I left the way I put down a glass entering  
another room, meaning to come back for it,

still anticipates my hand or body. Maybe  
in one of those places a man looks up from  
his reading expecting me to enter, or a woman

rounding a corner pauses beside old stones  
for a second, thinking it's me crossing the square.  
And maybe only the streets wait, only the trees

arching above them. Some mornings, groggy  
from sleep, uncertain which life is mine, I turn  
as bigamists must, wondering just whose embrace

I will enter. My son has bashed the car door,  
my wife glowers. Does a will to evasion pull  
or is it one of those lives left standing open,

junctions, discontinued branches, uncompleted,  
hanging fire, waving desperately, occasions  
and orphaned possibilities only I am missing from?