

Paul Celan · *David Graham*

“I hear that the axe has flowered,”
you said. It must have been
a furious bloom, for the chips that flew
to heal you, and then lie
soft and harmless on your collar.

It must have been a flowering
when the train rolled
from its tunnel, led by a shaft
of the purest light, as if
goodness could roll from the grave.

Your parents, riding that train,
could not have foreseen
an axe gone crazy, glinting
black, an axe that would salt
and eat its own handle.

Was it impossible for you
in Paris, lecturing
to children of the dead?
Did I hear you sift down
like chalk dusting a classroom?

Under a desktop in the last row
your initials deepen.
But I will have to stop saying
“Imagine Celan, who killed himself.”
Everyone kills himself.