

The Boy · *Boyer Rickel*

As he walks out of town, every so often he sneaks
Up to the side of a house and picks flowers,
Careful not to look in the windows where someone
Is reading a paper, or sleeping naked on a couch.
He kicks off his shoes when he comes to the churchyard
And drops his shirt under a lemon tree
As though he were ready for a swim in the pond
Near the groundskeeper's shack. Then darts
Through the rows of cypresses, out of sight
Of the saints in the church windows; half an hour
Wandering from one name to another until
The right one, where he lays the mostly white
And yellow flowers end to end, in a rectangle

In front of the marker. He did this not long ago
With his father. What he saw, or thought he saw—
He ran away but his father caught him, so he told
His father the rectangle was a window,
By looking hard you could see someone behind it.
Looking now and seeing nothing, he remembers
The hands were whiter than the whitewash
You paint lemon trees with, but he couldn't see
Anything else. His father stared hard with him
At the ground. He said he remembered only one
Other time—she thought he'd gone out for a paper
And sat on the bed talking to herself, stroking her huge
Belly—only then had she looked so alone and luminous.