

Not Here · *Victor Trelawny*

The laundry fidgets on the rope-line.
All month the wind gusted only enough
To shake my brother's blue bib
From the wooden clothespins.
We had to drive all night to get home.
I still don't feel like I'm here,
Because it's not the same: the grass needs mowing,
My father's work gloves stick up like puppets
On the handles of the wheelbarrow.

The hose sleeps like a snake in the poplar.
In the swimming pool five colors of fish
Swim through the bright heat.
I spray the water with my thumb
Over my feet in the yellow-green grass
That crackles like fire when I step into it.
Everything burns slow that doesn't flame,
Like the compost heap my father and I pitchforked
Into the wheelbarrow this spring.
He said, *Let me feel your muscle,*
And then could hardly tilt it up himself.
I sail a peach toward the road.

In the mailbox, a load of mail.
I run back with so much good news for my mother.
Except she's crying again.
I don't know why now. From the porch
I hear her crying into the phone.
Maybe my father finally came back
And left a number on the pad.
His spade still sticks into the garden:
The gourds are shrunken heads,
The tomato-vines are like winter
Twisted around their stakes.

Tomorrow when I climb up the hill
I will call the dog again—
Or maybe he has gone off somewhere too.
Then I would not want to find him.
The window nearest to the swingset has been broken.
Inside the drawers are all pulled out
And the mattress turned over.