

## Dale Zieroth / FOUR POEMS

### LAST NIGHT'S OWL

Last night's owl turned her head  
completely around for me; underneath  
I watched how lamplight  
threw her great grey hush  
up against the sky and made no division  
between the bird and the night  
heaven—and she did not fly

In a dream she came to my hand

Elsewhere in time she sat white  
in a hallway that ran  
straight to the dentist's foot pedal  
drill, his boiling trays,  
his pink hands  
The white owl freezes in her bell jar  
her friend the mallard flies off the wall  
(no slough wind ripples chintz or china here)  
As the glass bead eye of the hare  
steadies, leather cringes  
under pressure of a head

This dim world  
her white, and now this grey      glides  
as a dream, is gone  
Sudden as the revelation of the talons  
the soft night parts both ways

## WHAT IS GIVEN

I remember  
father wanting more cattle in the barn  
crushed together like brown bags  
I am digging with the two-pronged fork, with blisters  
the pain in the back begins to scheme

In his black toolshed,  
one window looking onto trees,  
fire brightens iron  
into white, he hammers at the coals,  
he picks a box of small things  
and mends and I talk into that  
mending

perhaps I dream/climb  
out through the frozen maple  
the icicles at the end of sugar branches  
the farmyard drops below

mother on her path to the garden, her hands  
in yellow apron, green grass at her feet  
and she tells me  
over and over this matter of love  
her word on everything and I ask  
for a gift:

        a bowl of red berries  
then a typewriter

The father looks up  
his animals everywhere  
all the doors flung wide

## THIS SIDE

It's hard to listen all the time:  
the voice of who you are  
coming at you.

Sometimes you hear another voice,  
as if from behind a green hedge  
where I might be walking

where poems slip out of my head  
hit the ground and start blooming.

On this side of the light  
I listen as hard as I can.

# HOUSE IN THE NIGHT

A house at the edge of the night  
is not shackled to its street;  
the dreams of the sleepers  
shunt it inch by inch

out of the ground and up  
where fog shapes bear it away,  
over the mountain and the mountainous  
cloud. The sleepers stir, take up

new positions, re-arrange their hips;  
their cool pillows are depthless  
as the eyeless dreams careen and dodge  
inside their confining hold.

—And when we awake now  
we know we have travelled: look, the friendly  
folk watch us descend, waving,  
the trees open to gather in

our dangling pipes and wires.  
We hover over this vacant lot,  
smooth out its rubble  
with our landing blast: *home!*

Here the birds come boldly  
to our windows as if inside  
they still can glimpse the old  
brambles and the displaced nests,

the future tangles rising  
from the doorbell's alarm; listen:  
the nails in our roof realign themselves  
in readiness all night long.