God's Country

We roll past the rusted dinosaurs of the field, their lug iron wheels buried a foot in dry mud ruts,

And piles of broken timber caught in white stone walls. Skeletons of cows loll beneath the wood to keep warm.

The evening mists coming off the fields melt into the haze and the smoke from the farmhouse chimney that lies over the windows.

We've been here before in God's country, gone past to the mountains searching for ghosttowns

And never found a mark where two towns had been (Joller and Jackson), except ten lost feet of railroad track,

And have come again to stop by the farm we abandoned once. Now it's autumn. Nights grow long.
We are tired
of being tourists
on a weed-
surrendered road.
We cannot look at this
Wreckage through the window
and not feel our backs work
beneath a load,
iron wheels unbrake
across a field.

JOSEPH GROSSMAN

The Red Shirt

Each morning
I forget a little more.
The solitary cry of the bluejay
grows dimmer.
Midnight memories
stay buried in the meadow.
Leaves change
in the midst of changing.

Then I remember my hand
hanging from its shoulder,
how it betrays me getting dressed.
How it twists the buttons
of your old red shirt.

GAIL GHAI