

From *Mystery of the Root*, by Robert S. Carr

### **Desertification**

Out in the yard, on the verge of midnight,  
you are watering — you won't do this  
in daylight, the sun burns the grass, you say —  
and I come out to see what words can do.

I find you smoldering there, copper light  
of streetlamp sparking in the cool hiss  
of a hose. I can be no help this way,  
you in the dark seeking in darkness you.

But we talk about the kids, the grass dead  
in strips and patches by mysterious means;  
you harp about a sprinkler. Petty thing,  
to crackle our tinder. Why flare back?

I could let us both escape. Instead,  
I fire that dry hole. Arid of all dreams,  
I lash like a cat's tail at anything irritating,  
ears against my skull, eyes cracked.

You hand me the gun, evaporate  
into night. I make the slow turn  
of azalea, sea grape, palm, bamboo.

Then by the cactus and rose I hesitate,  
hose slack: My desert, growing, burns  
what should lie green between us two.