

From *Lassing Park* by Peter Meinke

Old Houses

old houses
are best they have secrets
shadows trembling everywhere
in closet and corner their weaknesses secret
cracks in the blocks corroded pipes the termites' patient
gnawing Their strengths are secret too: the handcarved
attic beam the portrait paneled over a feeling they've
earned their way Every board in the house has been
pressed by finger and foot forehead and knee tears on
old tiles have worn their stories stories spread through
the rooms like the scent of gardenias we breathe stories
here we inhale old passions exhale the dead resolutions
that are still moving In the closet there is . . . something
Sun slants through casement windows around slender
candles shattering on the wicker where we sit in love
with the shadows old houses are best old oaks bend over
them whispering it's all right it's all right all those kids
had fun and remember that young couple who had such
love for each other it overflowed and did the azaleas sing
and birds blaze like roses ? and even the garage
long ago burned down was an object of affection