

THE SPOON RIVER Poetry Review

David Bond

Pastoral

For Victoria

This morning, after the storm's exquisite horror
has passed over our house in a turbulent sea of gases,
tree tops bent with magnums of wild wind,
thunderclouds twisting around blinks of light, hooks of rain;

this morning, when all things seem altered,
suspended in the uncertainty of a ground fog
that drains all color from my unmown savanna of lawn;
as I blink in wonder at the leaden length

of belly flopped white oak nearby,
the wings of scattered broken branches,
I am reminded of the music of Beethoven
and the uncertain nights a decade past

as we listened from our separate rooms
to The Great Composers, a grocery-chain collection
for the non-connoisseur, yet pleasing to such as me,
one gratified by sheer simplicity, Starbucks' Columbia,

for example, the pungent steam which now rises,
wanders its radiant way past my smile,
wanders like the chill mist mixing with the coffee's warmth
as I step outside, and for some reason, I sense this to be a good thing,

a good beginning to the day, to be enfolded
in such a sunken world of quietude and joy.
"I love a tree more than a man," Ludwig supposedly said,
and although the sublime dangers of nature lie

paraphrased before me, I would generally agree.
You were in grade school then, which grade I've forgotten,
when the rusty horseshoe nailed above our front door twitched
and swiveled downward; the iconography of a nuclear family went
awry.

I walked you down the drive at dawn to an idling yellow bus,
then numbly drove to work at a mine fast nearing extinction.
Listen: something happened to us, some great dissonance bound
in a jarring, off-key passage of loneliness and pain that we tried

each night to forget as we picked from our small wax
selection of symphonies, Mozart, Bach, Handel, but usually
the ambivalent Beethoven, the distant thunder of his Pastoral groaning
just on the edge of merriment; Beethoven, bowed with the gift

of inevitability, bent over the soft piano further and further
each year, each day, as his deafness grew upon him,
his heart still refusing to stop its singing of the rightness
of this world, that which we didn't yet believe to be true.