

Shadows

Poetry and Photos by Linda Baumgarten

2022

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Design by John Watson

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Williamsburg, Virginia.

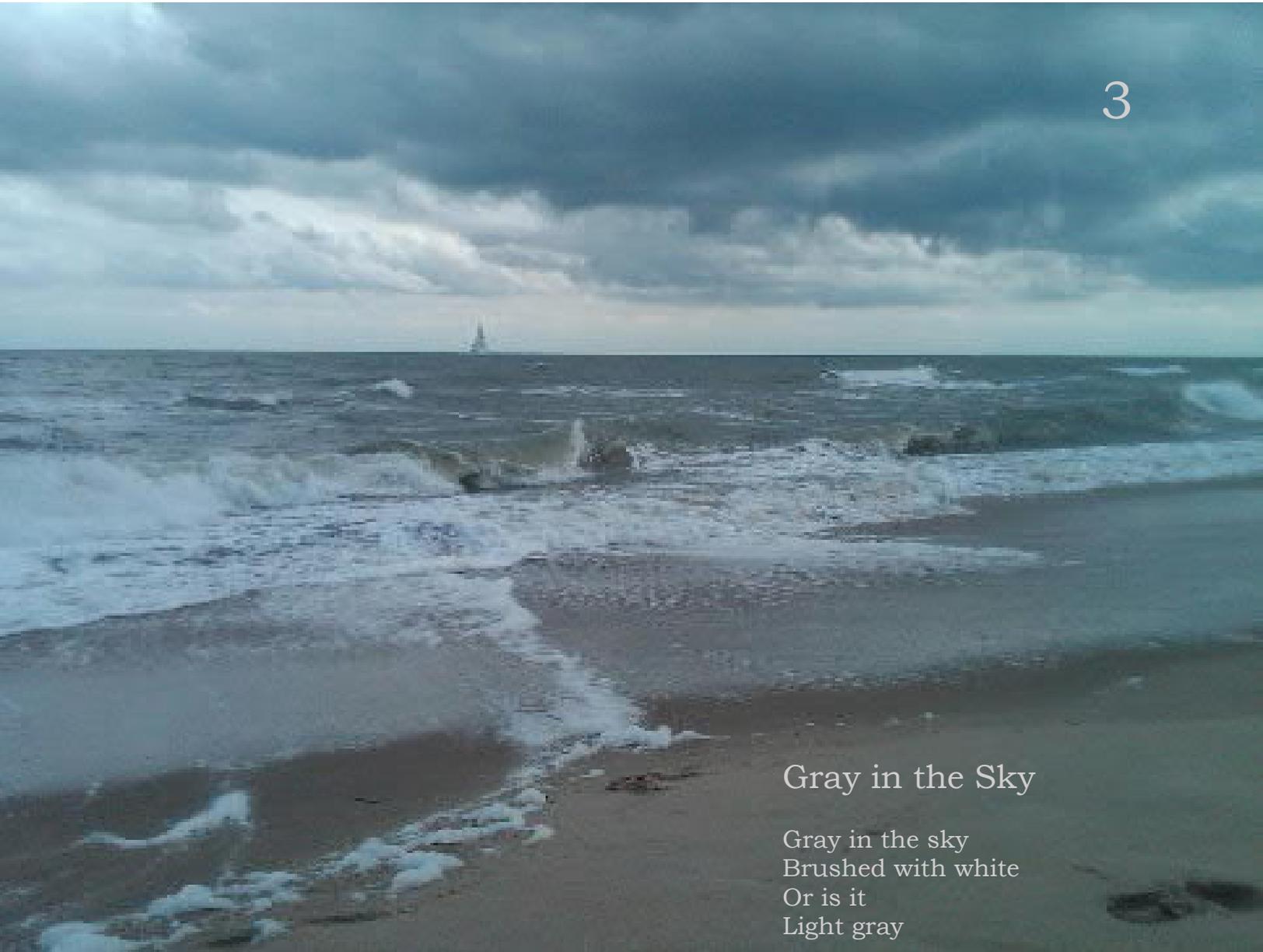


Verse Verso

Poetry
Sows flowers
And it comes up
Wheat
Poetry is
A view out
Of
Someone else's
Window
Poetry is
A glimpse
At
What causes
The shadows
Poetry can define
Love
In ten thousand words
And
God
In three
Or
Vice versa.

Crayons

Have you ever noticed
How many things are
Gray
When I was a child
My little hands
Drew trees
And I always colored them
Brown and green
But now I see
Springtime trees
Have trunks of
Gray
Not brown
The green is still a promise
I don't even remember
A crayon that was
Gray
I always made the sky
Blue
With white clouds
And some days I still see
them
Blue and white
But so often
They are
Gray
On
Gray
The blacktop road
Past our house
Isn't really
Black
And the ocean water
Isn't really
Blue
When you really look
Gray
Is all
Around us
But sometimes I do miss
My crayons.



Gray in the Sky

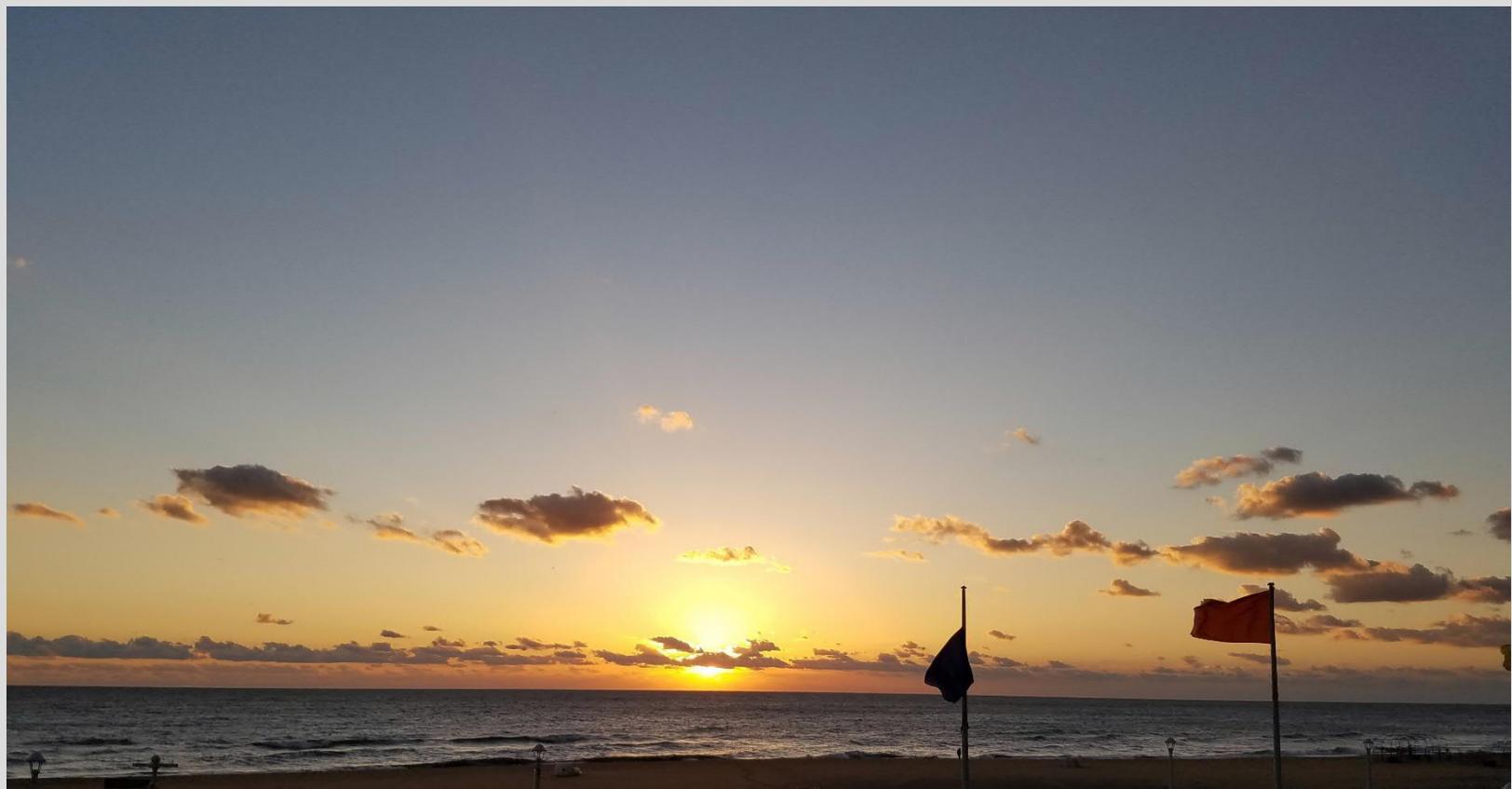
Gray in the sky
Brushed with white
Or is it
Light gray

Water-heavy clouds
Lowering themselves
To touch
The ocean
Gray water
Capped with white
Or is it
Pale gray
Wave on wave
Each one the same
Each one unique
Gray in the birds
Scampering eagerly
To water
And back
Gray on gray
Not much black
Or white
Today.

September Beach

I sit and watch
The lavender scene
Outside my window
Overlooking the ocean
A muffled roar
As waves come and go
Breaking in
Patterns
That never repeat
Exactly
Yet always repeat
Morning birds
And morning people
Go by
But it feels like
I'm alone
With the sunrise
Colors begin to glow
Pink
And silvered gray
Then gilded blue

A single ray of solid gold
And soon the sun
Skips its band of light
All the way to the shore
And I have to look away
People declare
Their righteous wars
And unrighteous
But I sit
Squinting my eyes
The waves and the sun
Continue
I've been afraid
And I have cried
I think
I will again
But now I sit
Still
The sun came up
For me.



Window Shade

I sit in bed
Cradling my first cup of tea
At the stirring of the day
The one I love
Is breathing softly beside me
Hair cowlicked by the pillow
Like a mischievous child
With the angelic face of sleep
Across from me
A white shade is drawn
Over the uncurtained window
The shadowy mullions
Frame leafy patterns
Shifting
In the morning's unfelt breeze
The half shutter
Casts itself
In right angles
And ladders
Of moveable louvers
Soon my love will rise
And let in the sun
We'll go into the morning
And to our work
And I'll carry the memento
Of that window
With the white shade drawn.

Watching Stars

When we are old
We'll watch the sunrise
Every day
From our easy chairs
(You'll drink hot chocolate
Cooled way down
And I'll have tea
With milk)
When we are old
We'll take our walks
A little slower
Than we do
Now
We'll look for patterns
In the clouds
White and gray
Salmon
On blue

At the end of the day
We'll look up at stars
We'll study each cluster
And
How it was named
We'll talk about
What others see
When they look at the moon
Or wonder
What they saw
Many centuries ago
Valentine
When we are old
Will you watch the sky
With me?

Summer Shadows

I walked alone
Again tonight
Along streets named for seasons
Setting a slow pace
To suit the humidity
The fire of the day
Had cooled to merely
Hot
The sunset
In a cloudless sky
Promised to be unspectacular
And even the cicadas
Spoke
With a lazy drawl
Dog walkers chatted quietly
While their dogs nuzzled
And men pushed noisy mowers
Aware of tomorrow's forecast
I looked at the houses
With their perfect facades
Through suburban windows
Lights came on
Ceiling fans turned
Silently
Television sets glowed blue
And shadows moved
Across translucent shades

I paused briefly
Wondering
What do people see
When they walk
Past our windows
Then
Venus appeared
From behind the trees
To announce another
Summer night
Studded with stars
Competing with the fireflies
Below
I turned toward home
Following my shadows
From the street lights behind me
Tracing the steps
We've walked so many times
Thinking to myself
Walking alone is fine
Sometimes
But I miss your shadow
Next to mine.



Trio in April, Part II

This week
 I found myself
 Where
 I used to walk
 I saw the same old shadows
 Of fence posts
 Crossing my path
 Will shadows
 Always make me think
 Of
 Us
 In some ways
 We're an old couple
 Now
 Familiar and routine
 And still
 I feel warmer
 When your hand circles mine
 And still
 I need you
 To
 Stand next to me
 And look into my eyes
 With a smile in yours
 So I can see my springtime
 Self
 Reflected there.

Walking

When
First we loved
We walked entwined
So close
Our shadows became
One
As years passed
We still walked
But
Our shadows separated
Now he walks
Slower than
He wishes
To suit my pace
And I walk
Faster
Than
I'm comfortable
A good
Marriage
Is like that.



This Birthday

The day before
 Another birthday
 I stared into the glass
 Seeing lines
 I'd never seen before
 Making faces
 And
 Watching the wrinkles
 Form around my eyes
 Thinking
 Maybe I laughed too much
 This year
 Wishing
 I looked young
 As I feel
 Though
 Not willing to give up
 What I know
 I carefully applied
 My creams and colors
 Remembering all the people
 Who called me "ma'am"
 This week
 When they used to call me "miss"
 Knowing makeup cannot hide
 A certain
 Maturity
 I decided to go through with it
 Anyway
 This birthday
 I celebrated my gifts
 Like a child
 Though no one put candles
 On my cake
 Perhaps they thought
 I'd outgrown fires
 At my age

But
 How
 Was I to make a wish
 With no candles
 On my birthday
 We walked hand in hand
 That night
 Watching the full moon
 Throw twin shadows before us
 He said he loved my shadow
 It looked like a girl
 With flying hair
 And happy step
 Leaning close to whisper
 I loved him
 The next morning
 Seeing the spent candle
 We burned the night before
 I turned my naked face
 To his
 And let my eyes crinkle
 As I smiled
 At his tousled hair
 Against the pink pillow
 Glad to see a little gray
 In the stubble on his chin
 I thought
 We are
 Our shadows
 But
 We are more
 And
 We haven't outgrown fires.



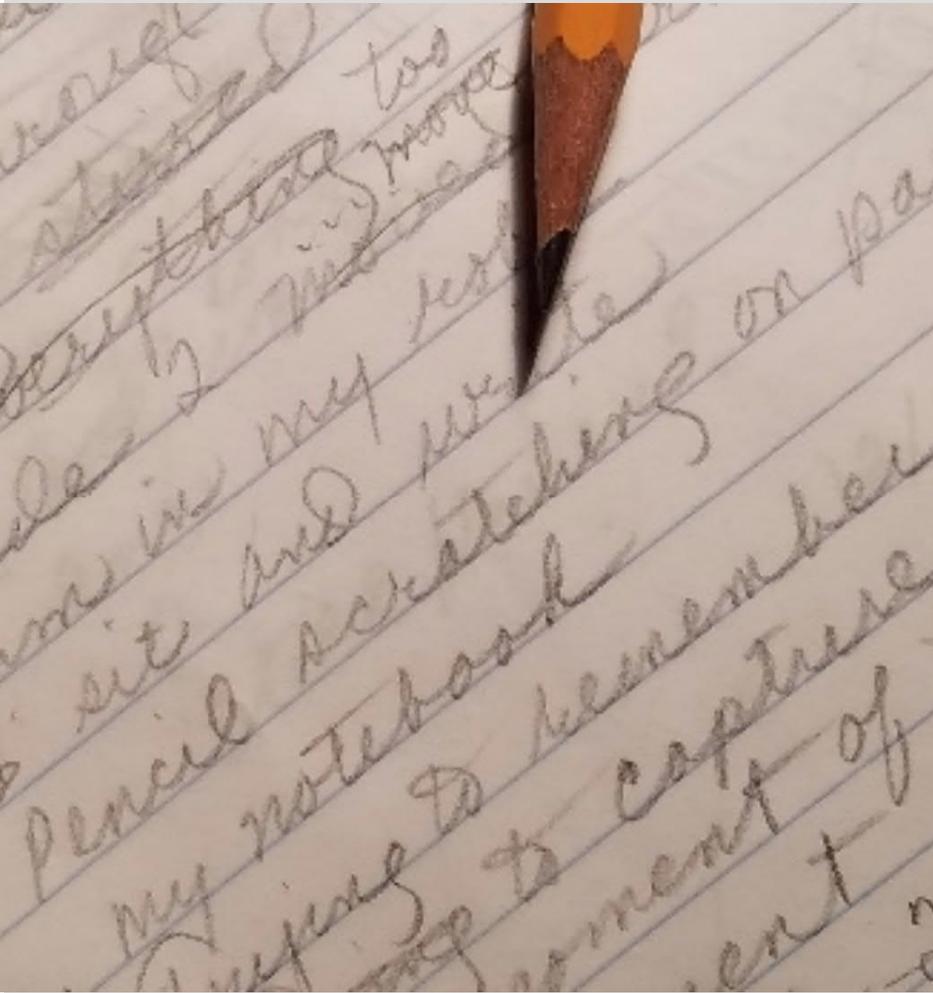
Comet

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Outside my window
The moon settled down
Behind a shadow tree
I was sitting up
With poetry
My companion
In the night
This week we saw a comet
With a diaphanous wake
Of light
Yet
Strangely
Still
In the sky
Like a picture
Freezing time
We talked
About
When pyramids were new



Did now-dead people
Watch the moon set
Too
From windows
In a quiet room
Did they love
As we do
Imperfect
Passionate
Did they watch time
Pass by
Too fast
Or wonder
What will come
Tomorrow night?



Still Shadows

It is still
 Mostly dark
 When I part the curtain
 On my upper window
 Huge shapes
 Sprawl across the snow
 Below
 Dark shadows
 Of branches
 Bare of leaves
 Backlit by an icy moon
 Slicing through thin air
 Nothing moves
 Too cold to stir
 Inside I move
 Across the room
 Warm in my robe
 I sit and write
 Pencil scratching
 In my notebook
 Trying
 To capture
 That moment of the shadows
 The moment
 Passed
 But
 It is
 Still.

Moondial

Gray shadows
Of bare trees
Sprawl across
The snow-dusted yard
Parallel to the fence
The last time
I looked
They'd angled off
Witness to
Passing time
All was still
In crystal air
No one stirred
Even the nighttime animals
Seemed to be asleep
All except
Me
I looked out
From the darkened bedroom
Watching the giant dial
Of trees and moon
Marking my hours
In shadows.

8/13/18

Keep Writing
with appreciation to Parker J. PalmerI must begin / again
~~By~~ standing at ^{an} the upper window

Looking at the dark

Keep Writing

But I shake my head ~~and~~

I must begin

I say to myself

Again

Standing at an upper window

So you've written ^{this poem} that ~~is~~

Looking at the dark

Shaking my head

Shaking my head

Yet / the

I say to myself

You've already written this poem

You've already written this poem

Tonight

Yet

The words keep intruding

The words keep intruding

So

So

I keep writing

I keep writing

Tonight the moon is dark

Tonight the moon is dark

No shadow trees

No shadow trees

Only a distant street lamp

Only a distant street lamp

Outlining the dim building

Outlining the dim building

Where the one I love does his work

Where the one I love does his work

A pinpoint of electronic light

A pinpoint of electronic light

In the room below

In the room below

Waits for us to press a switch

Waits for us to press a switch

I almost laugh

I almost laugh

Surely these

Surely these

Are not the stuff of poems

Are not the stuff of poems

But the words keep writing themselves

But the words keep writing themselves

As if

As if

My life depends on it

My life depends on it

And I

And I

Keep writing.

Keep writing.

Are not the stuff of poems

But ^{the words} keep writing themselvesas if my life depended ^{on} it.

Darkly

I walk along
Eyes cast down
Studying the shapes
In my path
Mostly gray on light
Writhing
With the wind
Sometimes
I see a shape
I know
Myself
But elongated and distorted
Now a new shape
A flicking tail
A beak
Indistinct
I cannot really see it clearly
But I know
It will be a bird
If only
I look up
At the trees
And the sun.



Lenten Walk

I close the door
Behind me
My footsteps follow
The pebbled road
Sun shines feebly
Through chilly air
Scarcely warm
White blossoms glow
In the afternoon light
That casts long fingers
Through leafless trees
Across my path
A street sign
Forms
A shadowy cross
My fingers are cold
I curl them
Inside my sleeves
Water splashes
From the fountain
In the pond
A lone waterbird
Extends its long neck
Reflected in the water
So still
Real and reflection
Are
One
Back home
I notice
Lenten roses are blooming
Just in time.





Daffodils and I

The daffodils bow their heads
Giving up their quest
For sun
The dark sky
And cold wind
Tell me
Spring has not yet come
I huddle inside my warm coat
And draw the scarf closer
No shadows follow me
No sun greets my face
The daffodils and I
Bow our heads
To wait.



Past

I walked on
A spring day
Clouds darkened the sky
Rare sun
Broke through
And brisk wind chilled the air
But white blossoms
Told of balmy days
Ahead
Just then the sun
Lit on a branch of flowers
Sunshine on white
Made dramatic by dark sky beyond
As I passed
I wished
For a picture
To keep the memory from fading
I kept on walking
Still wanting
What I passed
I photographed the next tree
But it wasn't the same
Maybe it will make
Its own memory.

Colors

Green
 All around me
 Tender grass
 Encouraged by the early spring
 Rains
 Tall trees
 Populated with leaves
 Bustling
 Breathing
 In the fresh winds
 I walk
 And
 Flowers nod at me
 As I pass
 Yellow has gone
 Now it is mostly purple
 And
 Shades of lavender
 Colors of mourning

My troubled brain reminds me
 Though I wonder
 Does God agree
 With that
 Meaning of purple
 I look ahead
 At my concrete path
 Gray shadows at my feet
 Echo the busy-ness
 Of wind-blown leaves
 High above
 And here and there
 A leaf has left a more permanent mark
 On the path
 To witness its passing
 I breathe
 In and out
 And nod back at the purple flowers
 As I keep walking.



Leaves

I love
To watch
The dry leaves
Along my path
Lifted by the breeze
And tossed
Into new shapes
 Do they remember
 When they were soft
 And green
 When they gave life
 To the tree
 And reached for the sun
Now the sun
Throws a primeval creature
On the ground
Or makes the leaf shine
Only to be lifted again
And carried away
Finally to rest
In the shadowy woods
To become the earth
Anew.



Shadows

A shadow soared
Across the earth
The shape of a cross
With wings
That didn't move
A plane
Or a bird on the draft
How can we tell
How do shadows work
Are they larger
Close to earth
Smaller near the Sun
Or the other way round?

