

# The Giver and The Gone

*by Philip F. Clark*

They were once a crown,  
of some living stag -- not quite old,  
not quite young: now bone.  
Something at the cusp of its age.  
Here they stand, given by a loved friend  
on a place in my home; smelling, when  
I get very close, of time.  
They are shaped like small waves  
or young trees, curling each way,  
emanating elongated fingers  
of the once-animal they were.  
At the root from where they were pulled,  
they are crimped with clamshell skeins  
of their beginning -- aureoles of  
amber and pink, mushroom-headed  
skin, curving to their points of  
smooth life, burnished, worn.  
One wonders: what trees felt their  
rut, what snow lifted off them,  
what fights might have scarred  
their now peaceful cadavers?  
My fingers work them, often; scan their  
roaming strides along my hand.  
They change in the light and dark:  
lift shadows and bury form.  
But for the beauty of them,  
I think of two things as I hold them:  
the giver and the gone.

