

Absolution

by Philip F. Clark

Father, trouble me memory;
laconic, idle, some glint on the dark.
Recall us to me: what did we have,
or what did we lose? Like some late
affection, open me again, laugh it
out of us. It is not loss I'm looking to
put back together, papered over by
time, but rather that spontaneous
picking through vaults -- suddenly
opened -- let's both search there,
with just the light of that caustic
twinge of recognition in your voice:
"You were ten, I think," "Perhaps older."
An Easter, all dressed up, waiting, impatient,
bored stiff as the dresses your daughters
wore, or our ties -- too tight on bright
white shirts as we walked to mass,
to listen, sullen under stained-glass
pontification -- the men taking communion;
the women, veiled. Everyone waiting
for the bars to open. What prayer
passed us by as the incense blessed
us, heads bowed in genuflection?
I too, have taken bread on my tongue,
and with other unguents fed need.
We fled, each of us, to different exits:
You to home, and I to men I would
never go to church with.

