

Kaddish

by Philip F. Clark

"He was something else,"
they said. That black he
always wore -- the motorcycle
jacket and chaps -- worn well and long;
the boots that walked over or past us
and we gladly met step for step;
the slow way he had of unbuckling
the night on us.
That laugh of his, his eyes
a welcome or warning,
"No, not you," "Not yet."
He smoked. He drank. He regaled us
with stories, gossip; and like a coven
we listened, rapt, intent, in thrall.
We never knew his next move
but watched and hoped for it.
Bars would fill, waiting for that laugh.
Summer nights or frozen
winter, the crackles of his black.
Gone long these years, there is not a room
that doesn't hold his polish and his sweat.
We gather here, but have few words.
A Kaddish for the man we met.

