

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.

