

Earth Below

by Swanson Tudor

Cleaning a stranger's gutter of
acorn
leaves and empty wasps
nests
Standing on a slate roof, the
shingles
gray and slick with rain
under my feet

chipped, cracked loose-leaf
pages about to slip their binding.
Waiting for a gust of wind,
a misplaced step to send them down
to the granite walkway below

exploding into fine infinite flakes.
I could not go forward or back
a vision of my grandfather standing over me
shaking his head at the carelessness of my death.
Sitting on the wet peak of this stone roof

I could see a stretch of the James River
moving east toward Richmond,
past Hollywood cemetery
rows of stone that mark
the confederate dead

pointing the way under Lee Bridge.
Lover's leap to a bank of smooth shale.
Where I sat drinking beer that past summer
watching a group of hard shell Baptists
line up to be saved in it's muddy waters

their Sunday best soaked.
Consolation clung to them
they sway up the stone bank
immortal drunks

tight with the Holy Ghost.

