

THE DOCTOR

Father used to talk about him:
an odd man in round-rim glasses
bold and black, held perpetually
high on the nose. A dapple grey
cantering through the long grass
of his hair, not quite shoulder length,
tripping eccentric.

Saturday nights at the Legion
playing crib with bachelors:
scotch on the bar, smoke to his lips,
looking for a 4-5-6 run,
lecturing on Yeats, the wonder of war,
what baby he'd birthed that morning
and the value of a good dog,
his own a mastiff large and sluggish
that never left his side.
The game over, he'd leave on a high note,
the animal his shadow.

When the time came he,
in withered old age,
pronounced my grandmother's death
much as he did her name;
the hint of an autumn breeze

Winnie

Winnie

The repetition just to be sure;
his pulse a racing of hooves.

That night he had a drink or two with the old man,
who never spoke of his death weeks later,
preferred their card games instead.
Never the half glass of scotch
resting on the end table, the rocking chair,
his long hair parted to the side,
a hole in his face where the bullet went;
the old mastiff staring doorward,
inconsolably prostrate across boney feet,
refused to move an inch
even when the constable came.