

Jack Stewart

Green Lessons

When you taught me to prune,
kneeling in front of a bank of junipers,
lifting each feathered layer,
tracing the browning limb to the bole,
in the shadow the pale green flare
of the sliced stick oozed with a bitter smell.

For an hour we gathered refuse
and space. When we finally stood,
the imprints on our knees
looked permanent. We carried the dead
clippings to the compost heap, the future
garnered from an hour's hard prayer.

Today I've brought a trash bag for the weeds,
the leaves from a neighbor's dogwood
littered about my roots.
I've brought a knife to edge the border
at each headstone. This is the kingdom I inherit,
the land I set in order.