

UNDER CLOUDS*Todd Robinson*

Ides of August and you confide wanton lusts  
     to elms and maples under eternal cicada purr,  
 your beat-up feet purpling pavement,  
  
 nothing but concentric circles of marital bracken  
     from here to forever, God's choir robe of cirrus  
 clouds just more vapor to flavor wavering  
  
 summer. The poem has already whistled past  
     its subject; her green veins gone mossy  
 from legal cops and clinical drips, slurred natter  
  
 of whatever she said about Rushdie's eye  
     while you tongued the pebble of a koan:  
 "When arising and vanishing go on unceasingly,  
  
 what then?" A phone you cannot stop touching  
     holds her faltering face and voice, tallies  
 particulates and pollen, ultraviolet squirming  
  
 through cell walls to light the wick of some  
     future ontology, but cannot compel you to call  
 her back after the latest squall's *mea culpa*,  
  
 nor measure how much it aches to strain against  
     the ropes keeping you sober. Here and not here,  
 you waver through muddy stanzas and starlight,  
  
 trying to burn off the crush you have lately  
     nursed for another barefoot poet with licorice  
 laugh. When your orphaned dreamboat dozes  
  
 through autonomous moon glow or erotic water  
     thwups and crumples treetops, weather bruising  
 the city's measly spine again, what then?