

## Arche di Scaligeri, Verona

Tombs. The Scaligeri here are tucked up  
into monuments rinsed by rains  
that make their marble points gleam

like gems. For a fee we get the message, stand  
among the lovely dead damping our hunger  
together. We're tired. It's getting late.

Catspaws and crime raised them to their noble  
pitch. Great families breed on greater sins,  
blood begotten, spilled, though we acquit them  
as we do the plundering bees who gild  
the victims they despoil. A field

of flowers like burning jewels fills the wake  
of their appetite. These rigid effigies bore  
the seed, these blanched brows wore their crown.

But our soft shower washes the old high reign  
away. We're in the needy present again.

Across the street the *ristorante's* scarlet  
sign gleams like a smile. Seafoods on spits  
glisten beneath gilt chandeliers

like treasures. This is our temple bright against  
the rain. How uncondemning we with eager  
appetites devour these snow-white

scavengers plump with the riches of their  
deep who prove such pottage to our  
high taste washed down with the gold, assuaging wine.

John R. Reed