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The Return

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THE RETURN

for Paul

Under the summer walnut trees we welcomed
the sting of nine-volt batteries with our tongues.
I can still taste that dullness:
Margie's wild fists slamming my nose until it bled
great drops on the dusty infield.
The Lowcamp brothers holding you down
jabbing chestnut spikes into your belly.
Brother, let's go back.
I heard young Lowcamp is fifty, drunk,
and won't answer his door. Let's go back
and knock. Knock until the knocking
becomes a stubborn nightmare, his only sound.
Shake the old tree for the few nuts it still grows
and skid on the black skins until the stains
and our mistakes refuse to wash away.