GETHSEMANI ABBEY

—by J. T. Ledbetter

the late sun on the leaves
dapples the white crosses
beside the old walls
tonight the moon will be full
again and I will lie awake
thinking of you my God
wondering if I can go home now
if a week is long enough
to burn my sins out of me
whether praying the hours
at 3:15 in the morning
in the cold church
is enough
watching the Brothers in the light
of the candles
waiting for Mass
on my knees
listening for God

"Are there other protestants here?"

(I don’t know the rosary
but find the holy water cool
on my forehead)

and Father Michael moves
from the shadows
bringing Christ to me
watching me closely
holding me with his eyes

it has started to rain
tomorrow the leaves will be wet
in the retreatant’s garden
but the old Brother will be there
on his knees among
the shrubs
lost to his brother’s world in Cincinnati
touching the earth reverently
like a lover
gently opening the fronds
and I watch from the window
of the bus back to Louisville
full of light
and unusual prayers
going back where I know the liturgy
among familiar groves of thought
until the trees hide the Abbey
in fold upon fold of sweet Kentucky hills
and the white crosses
and the old Brother beautifully lost
there in the damp garden
of God