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## Stump (poem)

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STUMP

John Gery

A hollowed-out trunk in a field, a tree  
I never knew – catalpa, maybe, or elm –  
to us a shallow fort we soon outgrew,  
it withstood a hard decade of winters.

Look at it now: fat stub, a small lump  
stuck in my imagination, like a crumb  
brushed under table linen. Frost,  
no doubt, had killed it, or who knows,

a rare pestilence of scarabs. Yet glued  
still to the inside wall of my cranium  
it remains somehow, faded, to be exhumed  
like this, its jagged edges splintering

above that hide of snow we loved  
to puncture with our boots, stumbling  
into its core. And it has worn through  
the years of my forgetting friends' names,

the number of dead in the Arab war – a mere  
trace of nothing, a place where I scraped  
my knee once, sat on its roots and cried,  
though who can recall what for.