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“Acceptance, Finally” and “In Our Time” (poems)

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*John Gery***Acceptance, Finally**

as when a street out of town
evens, narrows
 without warning
into a gentle right turn

neither of us anticipated, then
abruptly enters a dense fog
 so we stop and
log hours of lying still on our

backs like two girls at the toe
of a tall pine, tugging at our wrists
 and tilting our knees
up until at last bare needles

high in the trees scribble
across the sky's clearing (we
 twist over each other
squinting to see) what one day

we will remember as, the
clouds now sweeping south, a surge
 of sheer delight:
our blue prize.

In Our Time

In our time we needed no walls
to protect us from our enemies, not
because our enemies had no ladders,
as they'd had in earlier times, nor
because we had finally made peace,
but because walls, as we built them,
consisted of only water and earth,
so soon would crumble. In our time
our enemies came to believe in us

and fear us, both, as though they knew
we knew our strengths were justified.
In our time, our enemies, no matter
how carefully they tried to avoid us,
could be found everywhere—at least
by us. In fact, whenever we traced them,
we could defeat our enemies each time
we found even one of them wanting,
so in these acts defeated ourselves. This

was not new, but in our time we became
the ones anxious to expose our enemies
as everyone else's enemies, looking away
from ourselves, always looking
away from ourselves. In our time,
water and earth were plentiful
and cheap, almost as plentiful, in fact,
as our enemies. We stood still only
when no one else was paying attention.

In our time, we worshiped the money
we printed with the tenderness of love,
not because we intended to oppress
those who refused to oppose our enemies

and devote themselves to our searching,
nor because our money was beautiful,
but because our money began to disappear,
replaced by the phantom of money
in which we believed but which soon,
no matter how carefully we traced it,

we came to fear—a phantom of a love
we sensed we should never question,
despite its sweet scent, not as an idol,
really, but more as a living god we
hastily yet faithfully, in our earnest
desire to suppress all our known
enemies, even those we need not
defend ourselves from, had devised
as the justifier of all the unjust-
ified things we wanted to be done.

We needed no walls, we needed no
enemies, and we most of all needed
no more money, really. We hardly
needed water and earth, looking away,
always away from ourselves. We had
our phantom, for which we stood still,
but we had no ladders for climbing
so defeated ourselves while no one else
was paying attention, and not long
after that, we crumbled.