

Roger Weingarten

The Southern Nights

Not easily lured by the flickering
elm's burning torso illuminating
the masked bandits of Louisa County
coming en masse down the lane to climb

the red slats of a corn crib
toward a gibbous moon turning a cloud
behind the windmill into a brown
recluse spider, I believe

the secret of my husband's ambition
is locked in a copper-lined
tobacco cabinet having a cigarette
in the easy chair, Tolstoy's

dog-eared "Kreutzer Sonata" open
across his thigh: Like interwoven
twin cocoons, a man on a train
must tell his story to a stranger. He

brings down the shade on the profile of my Missouri
meerschaum smoldering
sensamilla on the porch, pulls the chain
on the reading lamp, and contemplates divorce. I

am not put out that the newspaper mulch
weighted down with clods between cornflowers
and red-leafed spinach has been pushed aside
by volunteers; not panicked
that our landlord, oil-stained and quick to laugh

at old jokes, is here
to ignite a pyramid of tractor tires, upwind
of our bedroom window, where the peafowl,
settled for the night, come screaming

above the immensity of linden branches
brimming over these peeled, rickety boards

I can see in the dark
glow of what will soon be

the special effect of finger shadows moving
like raccoons slowly on the still figure of my relaxed
insignificant self.