

# RICHARD SILBERG

## Tantrum

Death is the mother of beauty  
My mother is dead But I'm not  
beautiful

Do you follow  
my reasoning? my  
faux-naif conundrums? how  
I eat at the world with words

Throwing a death tantrum  
which is to gnaw at emptiness  
which is to chew on stillness

## Moving

Swollen with lasttimeness  
as I have been all my life  
I told him I'd take trains back  
we could still go down to the river

Larry was quiet didn't buy it

It seemed to me a golden thing we did  
our rambles by the Hudson past the playground  
to the Bridge beyond  
rats gulls condoms barges

In my memory  
we're tiny as fleas Larry and me on that  
mystic body by that wide  
silvery cloaca

I'm blurring him over Larry Lucas  
thin towheaded kid  
loner snickerer getaway guy

I remember once he taunted Johnny  
his me too showoff noisy little brother  
got him flexing straining his skinny arms  
to pop cannonballs  
Then he pulled down Johnny's shorts

Once wrestling in my room on my bed  
I pinned him started to tickle him  
felt his whippiness and a strange excitement  
flushed through imagining Madeline  
his mean pinched sexy older sister  
in her parochial school uniform  
short skirt kneesocks bucking underneath me

Larry's mother was dying  
cirrhosed her yellow skullhead  
too heavy for her neck

We never said a word about her

Or his father that he looked just like  
as if they were time's double Mr. Lucas

a furious speechless Larry thickened  
drooping in the eyelids moustaches

We did our things together  
balance-walking  
on the old green patina cannons  
in the courtyard of the Indian Museum  
strolling over the hump of Broadway  
to the Dumars Theater at 145th St.  
our river trip that long block  
to the underpass as if slipping  
inside a fissure of the city  
wooden walkway over the tracks  
and down to the water

Riverside Drive strip of green  
that runs the whole west flank of Manhattan  
wide power flow ships tour boats  
We did the playground hunted on the rocks  
hiked farther and farther up the shore  
But when I think of that riverine world  
I remember best just sitting professing  
books that I read the insides  
of the body anatomy physiology  
It seemed to spark us talking science  
Sun a star stars plasmas where atoms are made  
felt generous to draw that seething  
of creatures for him  
trilobite allosaurus smilodon  
against the New Jersey shore

I did take the train back  
to Washington Heights once  
but not for forty years

And the way we actually parted  
Larry spun and punched me "Gotya last!"  
he crowed and ran up the stairs  
me huffing after popeyed  
I knew I'd never catch him  
Got to his door just as he slammed it  
in my face stood there incredulous  
boggled hearing him slide down  
the inside shrieking with laughter