

The Only Empty Place

RICHARD LEHNERT

Arriving late to a party
I had almost not been asked to
and being no longer young
almost had not joined
seated by hosts I barely knew
at their table's only empty place
poured a red glass
passed a white plate
there was a moment when
the talking did not stop when
in some sourceless breeze
the candles did not blink when
no sudden thrill of portent
spidered up my spine when
nothing had happened or
felt about to happen when
the woman to my left
turned her face to me and
introduced herself as you

In that moment fifty years
reworked their puzzled order
every one now all along
had led me slant to you
and as I gave you my name
another voice I had never heard
though it was my voice
sang to me small and clear
And this is what she looks like