

pH Balance
Shelley Jinks Johnson

In those days when the soil, worm, seed, and spider
All writhed in the black lush compost of nature's doing,
My hands ached to grip a spade and for dirty fingernails.

The rotting stump slowly shattered, its trunk long since cut down
By Gustav or Isaac or whichever year's namesake we use to mark time.
They run together now, too many and too often to keep straight.

In those days, the light spilled and filled every crevice of delighted life,
Like summer finally breaking open to lend its honeyed orange glow
To a South heat-weary and scorched but still grateful for its beauty.

Memories good and right, even if not completely true.
I can smell them in exquisite detail, but their picture blurs.
Like a polaroid from an impatient photographer.

In these days, I am grief-weary and scorched;
Gilded by the furnace-glow of loss, mocked by delight,
And searching for the gratitude buried beneath black ash soil.