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Cypresses

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Cypresses

Pulled by the roots from a hot Southern town
where we unfolded like geraniums, grafted
to the icy bayside of a Northern wilderness—
fast cars, fast girls, fast tongues!—
we fasted till your asthma kicked up and the very air
slid through the bellows of your lungs.
At knife point once you gave up your allowance.
I dyed my hair and applied lipstick with a vengeance
and let the boys come, I didn't care.
You were summer's fair-haired boy.
You would rather be funny than smart. All night
at your blond violin, playing the same tune over again,
getting it right: the ode to joy you understood
at fourteen, and finally got right, all of us
yelling at you to *shut up*. At seventeen you went under,
went into the trees in your new Triumph. I've gone
back South once or twice, though you never will.
The last time I sat at Cafe du Monde
I watched the pigeons swirl like a cape
around Jackson's horse, in Jackson's square,
sky gilded like a rococo sky, a place
like any other to tell the truth—
perhaps more pink. I went to Pierre Park
and the labyrinthine channels of water,
now empty of significance. Near Audubon
where the silted river slides to the sea
with its cargo of Northern sorrows, I saw cypresses
hanging their hair in the park's charred light.
Now you come to me in dreams and tell me, *it's too cold*,
though the long roots of the trees wrap you round
and wind blows warm from the Gulf.