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## Homecoming

William Pitt Root

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## Homecoming

after Albinas Zukauskas

The millstones are worn down  
The path— overgrown by grass.  
No doorsill.  
Where the cradle stood— a quaking aspen.  
A bird cries out for the baker.

The helmet, punctured. Like cats  
squirrels lap the dew.  
No soldier here.  
War killed the soldier.  
The soldier's blood and valor  
are in the roots' domain.

Thistles flourish,  
stare through broken windows.  
No ones in the cottage  
where mother used to cry:  
*Time for bed!*  
Hands, that soothed and punished...  
What hands? The woods are everywhere.

The lash of the birch would be  
sweeter than honey!  
But to wield it— no one.  
Time goes on  
and the baker stands before me  
in the heat of a day long gone—  
the history of war,  
the whispering of aspens.

William Pitt Root