

HIGH REQUIEM

by Bill Tremblay

Smoke white as the priest's cinctured
alb rose with his call for us to shorten
the sentences of the dearly departed.
I saw millions of shadows wandering
beneath mosaic floors, shuffling in gray
catacombs where the old are left in storms
whose end they know will come but
never when. Blind ghosts bumped into
slime walls, knocking over iron braziers
of cold green fire. My dreams always
play out under gray cathedral grounds.
I hear voices lost in northern pines
as I walked along the river among birches.
Only they listened to my soul. I read
gospels chiseled in black bark like Egyptian
orisons singing up the sun. In the yellowed
candlelit choir loft I saw those who lived
before the flood, who loved before the halls
of hell sprang loose, the unremembered
sinners in my blood, my undocumented family
who kneeled before the thrones of lust,
the dead I carried for whom I lifted my eyes
to ask if—among those flickers—some mercy
could open the transept of God's heart with
syllables of intercession, one note on the organ
that would awaken in future congregations
a prayer for me in the arbor of my Gethsemane.