

Burning Love

In the fifth grade while the rest of us
craved baseball and candy,
Glenn fell in love. During recess
he kissed a girl behind the trees;
she had begun to grow breasts,
though he was too young to do much about that
or them. He was enchanted instead by her name
and wrote *Sue* again and again
on book covers; he daydreamed about marriage
in history and math. He even scratched
her name on a mesquite's skin with a fork
he swiped from his lunchroom tray.
Then in what passed for passion in those days,
he fashioned the heads of kitchen matches
into a tattoo on his wrist.
She gave off more heat than light.
Unimpressed by the blisters that
spelled her irrevocably into a scar,
she kissed another boy on the school bus home.
Glenn cried when he heard. He tried not to,
but he did. First heartbreak is always sad;
still he sensed how much worse
it might have been. Then he called himself lucky,
so lucky he hadn't fallen for Elizabeth.

Jerry Bradley