

POETRY

HAROLD SKULSKY

An Unnatural Act

Writing poetry is an unnatural act.
—Elizabeth Bishop

Sean Murren, master builder who has made
Carriage wheels for the Queen, stands in a glow
Of aureole sawdust, brooding on his trade.
This morning early, scouting high and low
For rotten tiles, he rode the sloping roof
Insouciant, a white-mained leprechaun
Of ancient sorceries, craftily aloof.
On lunch break, one fag more and on and on
Coughing his way into the usual trance,
He'll scrawl a sketch and some arithmetic
On an unpainted panel—one final dance
Poised to begin, one final conjurer's trick—
Crowning the stairs, soft as a kitten's purr:
The curving river of the bannister.