DALHOUSIE REVIEW

poiema

- for William Meredith

1

The Russian olive tree is dead. All year its roots battled the maple's and lost. I put it where I could see it grow. Each doing its own thing we would grow old together.

Today a silver heaviness is in my blood. Gray leaves flutter, gnarled trunks heave upwards to join other things I have taken in that are frail and cry, which we run from or starve the old, rain, desire.

2

This morning I read about Sartre's last days of Simone de Beauvoir in the hospital room with his corpse. She wanted to be alone with him; to lie beside him under the sheets. "No," the nurse said, "the gangrene." So she lay beside him on the sheets instead.

I have often been duped by the fragrance of death narcissus, gladioli—unmasked now as love's true opposite; its fraternal twin, monstrously continent and strong against friendship, blood, ambition, and—most fragile of all—desire. POETRY

In her small frame, in her old age, in her eyes so much defiance struggling for air . . .

In the undertow, to think-

(given their faith: without heaven and hell, without God and Spinoza, without pre-life and post-life, sans change, sans magic, sans mercy, or child of their loins to tell, "My mother Simone, my father Jean Paul")

Le mort so absolut, all that remains is to make all of the hour and place in 1929; all of a terrace at the Luxembourg Gardens where she first saw Jean Paul strolling beside the lake. And if

there is room or need, for blessing or for praise to praise then her mourning dress, the hands of the labourers who made the window at the Sorbonne where they first spoke; his first gift, a drawing—'Leibnitz bathing with the Monads'.

Praise to Leibnitz in August and that sunlit corridor—the tiny existences alone, to make, complete a life

- Shreela Ray