POETRY 233

The Hewel

When I was six or seven I was taken
By professional men out along Slow Hand Road
To Hermit's Valley. In what was left of that July
Quail exploded heigh-ho into the blowzy air
Stunned all afternoon by the joyless Remingtons.
One of the men shot a bird with bright feathers.
Years and years after, I asked him what he remembered.
Nearing ninety, high-skulled and gone in the throat,
He sighted along a perfectly hairless arm to a cock
Pheasant in The Illustrated London News, and nodded
At me as if telling this story could save his life.
But he was twice-mistaken.

Yellows and greens and scarlets Had fantailed the day like a Japanese firework. It was a Rainbird, a Hewel, a Green Woodpecker That bloomed to mind like the five-hundred-year-old Firebird bound for Egypt. If I could take him back Now down Slow Hand Road, I believe we would find Ashes.

J. Patrick Lewis