As thick as honey, heat is pouring from the sun.
A ragged cypress flings its shadow, a fringed shawl
Across the starkness of this empty noonday land.
The insects doze in deep-black humps of rock
And bowing over, bright and abject, flowers
Bleed across the land like wounds from stony veins.

In the distance frail olive trees spread veins
Of wrinkled boughs that reticule the sun
And lime and golden their pale stars of flowers
Cling shivering to the branches; blossom shawls
Those meagre trees which rise from boil of rocks
That break like pustules from the dust-wracked land.

With slumps of bodies, cordite smells, the land
Drinks in the blood now streaming from the veins
Of these dead men unsheltered by the rocks,
For blue-black bullets ripened in the sun,
Bombs fell, black pears, that lifted dense earth shawls
Strewing loose soil, no ceremonial flowers.

Into the sky dark birds, loose petals of flowers,
Spread noisy wings as blessing on the land.
Their whirring flight, a small salute, a shawl,
A shroud, yet sounds like bullets’ search for veins.
Red dust and blood congeal beneath the sun,
Yet resolution squats among these rocks.

Fire burns in far-off orchards, shells heft rocks,
Shaking tree roots to quicken them to flower
To be scorched fruitless by a different sun.
Some ancient sheep-tracks wander through the land
Where centuries of sheep have flowed, these veins
That pulse with travel even as thunder shawls
The sky and black rain falls like a fraying shawl
Instead of bombs. These people thread through rocks
Their simple lives; survival floods their veins.
Slaughter is a way of life, and lives flower
Where winds snatch petals tumbling to the land,
But olives swarm within the honey sun.

Though now the sun casts everywhere a shawl
That drapes the land with black, yet from the rocks
A tree will flower and fruit burst from its veins.

BETWEEN EACH TWINGLE

James E. Cooper

Still seesaws over lineaments of life
Descend on Paris for a mountain prize
As one blue star-chip flake of ice is called
In twinflower arcs from under balconies
That tongue like chits toward a zero axe
While all goes round. The Japanese explain,
More deft than camel’s-hair, through emptiness
Calligraphy can only intimate,
Within the breeze the mulberry bush goes round,
The scapes of mist between each twinge
Of plucking strings.