

DON RUSS

## NAMING THE MOURNING DOVE

I heard it mornings, low and far  
away. Not a moan exactly, nor a mourning sound—  
I hadn't those words—but like the dream  
of a sad and long-forgotten word

at the back of my head, like some lonely place  
I'd seen across the railroad tracks, green cave of leaves  
and trembling sunlight, dead campfires  
of traveling men.

I owned a house myself before I knew  
the sound was close outside the bedroom window  
and, even then, so quiet I could miss  
its two last notes.

*Zenaida macroura*, no mourner, will mate for life  
and sing all leafy Eden's lighted day.