
Strawberry Picking

He pressed his knees deep
Into damp
Black furrows yet unreached
By the sun's unwinking gaze.
My grandfather was
Quiet. He carefully
Clipped the voluptuous fruit
From its meager strand.

Meanwhile,
Dancing bare-toed between the untrodden berries,
And stepping not
Quite so delicately in his heavy bootprints,
I kept my impatient eye always
On his gray felt cap.

Every winter
The hollow-bellied deep freeze in the barn
Hungriily receives the fruit—
Crushed shortcake berries and quarts of freezer jam
For a toasted bagel
Or fresh warm bread.

This spring we are greeted by the bursting
Ripeness of the familiar strawberry patch.
I lead a withered hand
Across the dark, dry dirt and catch
What his feeble joints
Shake roughly to the earth.
Red berries dropped
From their greenness which soon
I will make
Into jam.

Melissa Burden