Sonnets for Pierre

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SONNETS FOR PIERRE

I

Noun "Pierre" is dead. The verb remains
For doodling, monogramming ash:
A rookie mourner must have grins.
I'll say grief lodgepoles me, I crash
Root-divot up. It lilies me
(In urn, not vase), it grasses hair
Now autumn-brown, awaiting snow
Soon all year round. I'll say, sweet Pierre,
Grief animals me, it doves and owls
And porcupines me at the base.
It lizards me, with new grief-tails
For old, coyotes me, and I seize
A pitchfork and ward shadows off.
I've shot up grief, ghost-towned enough.

II

The driveway, Pierre (forgive the word),
Is a memoriarium
Of you from leaned-on gate to bird.
Found dead and pondered. Here you nailed rim
For flipping baskets, here pitched at goals;
Here we joined tables, warned the dog
Retrieving, dodging, pingpong balls.
Pals came, and there was poke and tug
And goose — in short, a kraal of boys
And dogs. . . At the street-end no hearse
Backed in. Your tallness tottered, eyes
In sling, to that same car, where hours
Before, you'd sat, new-driver-tense,
And smoked, as usual, this last once.
Grief is all ego, and is none.
I'm half-proud, Pierre, I never think
Why this to me: I carry on,
With grief's bad manners sulk and dunk
Myself in you, become, am, you.
Like you at sports, I'm loath to lose
Yet know I've lost because I know
That carrying on is a lateral pass
From me to me. My ego's yours,
Tremendous, unfrustratable,
Grief in one piece, smashing the farce
Of death — yet nursing a broken will
To live. I dunk a curse in a sob,
Tie on young armor an old man's bib.

E. H. TEMPLIN

THREE POEMS
ON A PHOTOGRAPH

The camera's strict shadow
Locks the muscle in a rigor
Out of context with the accident or
Flux of time and holds you to no more
Than a moment's improbable anatomy of
Yourself. The heroic eye stares vacantly.
The mouth is set against itself.
Only the childlike shoulders show
A more than dull significance of light
In the innocence of their confusion.