

## In New Jersey

In New Jersey  
the highways keep chewing away at my father's garden  
until all that's left is an isosceles of soil  
where he plants some Burpee corn,  
the last defense against the siege of the suburbs.

By July the tall stalks support great ears of ripening fruit  
but the raccoons dodge cars and tandem trucks  
to pilfer as they must --  
my father's corn is worth the risk of ruin on any road.  
Aware that life is one long intricate defense  
against one damn thing or another  
my father runs a wire to the field in front  
and plants a radio beneath a bucket --  
a small rock and roll arcade,  
a galvanized pavilion of a.m. music from Philadelphia,  
believing that raccoons will be offended by the racket  
and seek farther fields to plunder.

The new immigrants in the neighbourhood from  
Portugal and Pakistan, from Malaysia and Egypt  
watch my father arrange the small shrine  
and gather later on the sidewalk  
to discuss its religious implications.  
All admit there are many things about this new land  
that they fail to understand.

The raccoons hold off for several days,  
the kernels of corn ripening yellow and succulent,  
until a human thief from farther up the road,  
tempted day after day by a radio in a garden  
playing hip hop and rap beneath a bucket,  
steals the music from the small temple one night  
and silence (diminished only by the sound of tires sucking wet asphalt),  
lures what's left of the wilderness back into the garden  
to bend the stalk of green ambition and  
savour sweetness never meant for human tongues.