

# PAT WHITING

## *Robert in the Barnhouse*

Across all distance your darkness  
Reaches out, slipping like a shadow  
Between the golden mountain sunrise  
And my complacent activity;

And when rain raps with measured  
Inconstancy upon the roof and shutters,  
Your darkness settles in the chair  
Across from mine, gathering form

And finality, until your laughter  
Rolls away through the night  
In distant thunder. I see  
You clearly then, your legs

Stretched out along the hearth,  
The fire dancing in your boots:  
You wear the guises of many  
Pasts. You smile, and

The world's frail courage, trapped  
For centuries between God and  
The ridgepole, comes falling  
Down, an old sun casting

Its last wise light onto our  
Faces; burning on the rafters;  
Coming at last to rest in  
The ashes of the age to which

We must belong. Born of the  
Chilly ashes is yet your darkness,  
Giving rise to cacophony  
There in the cavernous silence.