**The Mood of Words**

Richard Martin

Poems of night are at the window,

my bedroom silent in the clutter

abandoned by light.

The symphony of the sea in my ears

I’ve mentioned to no one.

The world is mired in senseless death.

Guns litter the dreams of mourners.

Peace succumbs to insanity’s evolution.

Yesterday, a neighbor accosted me with conversation.

“You know,” she said, “there are coyotes

loose in the moonlight. Warn your cats.”

TV promotes the decay of the human enterprise.

This is news to my cats.

They’re not sure what to make of it,

scratch at the door to go outside.

They appear to believe in the subtleties of green grass,

know the wind releases shadows only they can see.

They stalk the invisibility of things.

When they cry to come in,

I realize where I am.

If I valued coherence I wouldn’t veer off the path,

take little leaps into the unknown and back.

Friends think I disappear at night,

recharge on some other planet,

let my soul swim in an alien space.

It’s hard to say; if darkness has wings,

I can’t prove it.

But I move in concert with the speed of light.

Maybe, I’m outside the bedroom window.

Some nights I toss and turn in bed,

recite the prayers I knew as a child.

What came before the *Act of Contrition*,

the Big Bang or nothing at all?

Mom didn’t know – preferred

to sprinkle holy water on me rather than question.

“Look at the crucifix and say you’re sorry,” she told me.

I kept a light on in the closet in case

the stars went out one by one.

My brain is tuned fast and furious

is what a pediatrician told her.

“Understand.” he said. “He’s not the ghost

he claims to be. He believes in making believe.

It’s how he sees the world

whether it’s there or not.

He’s a conflicted little guy, composed

of chance and circumstance.”

The poems want in.

Coyote moves through the moon-starched yard,

a shadow in flight.