

## PEARS

We met over 40 years ago. Floating buttocky halves  
spooned into pastel fruit bowls, even drowned in  
Del Monte syrup, love at first taste. Your flesh

a luminous hue, hovering on the border of cream  
and August skies; your flavor pure as dreamed pleasure  
grazing my waking tongue, a melting sweetness

streaming down my throat; your name, a single syllable  
promising delight: *pear*, barely sound, mere parting of lips,  
and hint of breath, apple-green *p*, the sweetest

diphthong *ea*, all the air in the world, closed in rounded *rr'd*  
finality. A perfect word, reducing your rumpled, pinnacled  
self, to one gorgeous, Old English syllable: *per*.

Right now, six of you sit ripening on my windowsill.  
A sky-blue towel shields bottoms against further bruising  
from the wood even at birth you instinctively flee, hanging

off trees in swelling green-gold tears, yearning for earth,  
or growing to maturity in bottled, olive-green light, your dying  
breath suffusing aging liqueurs like the oldest I ever drank,

the summer I was 19, a century-old brandy served in snifters  
the likes of which this working-class boy had never seen.  
I tilted the giant crystal bowl; the fragrant liquid elongated

in mimicry of its remembered self and seeped into my mouth: a pear's  
ghost enveloped in flame lay down to rest on my tongue. We both  
were saved, at least for that night. Pear. Look of women I love

but don't lust after, I want to conjugate you: I pear, you pear,  
we pear. Like raspberries, Mozart and love, for me, sufficient proof  
of God's existence. I trust you. Lead me by the tongue to heaven.

—Steve Turtell