

M I C H A E L S H O R B

Gods of War

First Mars and Thor
Mayhem and hammer-wielder
El Cid and Iron Kaiser Karl
Sherman the Horse and
Patton the Tank
Cannon Man and
Fodder of the nation.

The terms are announced:
five of every seven goats slashed
one of three bushels of
wheat and corn burned
rubies buried in brass trunks
bottles of cognac
poured in the sea.

A finger's twitch could put an end
to terms of light, torched
documents could smoke like hangman's
rope and burst into flame
like the grail in hot coals,
children buried in sawdust,
green divisions in
the dark streets

blinking back fear.

MICHAEL SHORB was a poet, fiction writer, editor, and children's book author. His poetry has been published in more than 100 magazines and anthologies, including *The Nation*, *The Sun*, *Salzburg Poetry Review*, and *Kyoto Journal*. He was nominated for a Pushcart Poetry Award. Shorb succumbed to GIST, a rare form of cancer in 2012. His book of poetry, *Whale Walker's Morning*, was published posthumously in the winter of 2013 by Shabda Press.