

J E F F E R Y C . A L F I E R

Mansfield Avenue

Returning to Willimantic in the Summer of '45,
fresh lawns greened your road home from war.
From the shade of a wrap-around porch
your parents spoke of un-returning names
your memory's eye coalesced into faces
bright with other seasons. Some, lost to a blur
like Melville's lesser whales, were hard to conjure,
learning they left the world as they did,
weighing less than when they entered it
from mothers who sat up late, starting at any sound,
like sailors hearing breakers roar at midnight.

Home now, you climb stairs to a familiar bed
to rest twenty-year old bones still humming
from the grip held on gun turrets now fallen useless.
You pause by an upstairs window and sunlight
warms your hand-shaded brow as you squint
to focus on a neighborhood boy, born on a day
you can't recall, the brother of one of those vague ones
who didn't return from Tarawa. On his new bicycle
he descends the avenue on an errand he might forget.
From your window, with the sun glinting off fenders,
he grows smaller, lighter, under blossoming skies.

JEFFERY C. ALFIER received honorable mention for the Rachel Sherwood Poetry Prize. Recent credits include *Blue Earth Review*, *Pearl Magazine*, *River Oak Review*, and *The Saint Ann's Review*. He is author of a chapbook, *Strangers within the Gate* (2005).