

J A M E S D E A H L

Clay Jars

After a year no one seems to remember
the war

our lives go on while our soldiers die
without comment

there is no daily body count
no claim

of victory or defeat, almost no news
at all.

The war is like that final light
of summer

as it fades to autumn, to the silence
of frost

our dead shrivel with the October leaves
to be

crushed under the feet of school children
skipping home.

It is difficult to know what to do about
the dead

they vanish like clay jars of water spilled
in a desert

the dead whirl in a dust cloud like
wild birds

at night sand fills their throats
forever.

Each flag-draped coffin contains
a brother

our glass dreams bring a rain
of grief

what can grow today to redeem
our losses

when even the stars weep within
bruised clouds?

JAMES DEAHL was born in Pittsburgh in 1945, and grew up in that city as well as in and around the Laurel Highlands region of the Appalachian Mountains. He moved to Canada in 1970. He is the author (or translator) of sixteen literary titles, most recently: *The River's Stone Roots: Two dozen poems by Tu Fu, When Rivers Speak, and Blackbirds*. In 2001 Deahl was presented with the Charles Olson Award for Achievements in Poetry.