

Poems by Bertha Rogers

FALLING LEAVES PANTOUM

Last leaves scuffle for place
among blood-beating pigeons,
ripped edges ruffle downward,
doves beating up.

Blood-beaten pigeons
pinioned against gravity—
doves beat up,
pinions push down, pulse.

Pinned by gravity,
rustling wind-ripped leaves,
pinions pulsing down, pushing.
They fall to brash gravity.

Ruffling, wind-ripped leaves,
leaving tired trees,
fall from brash branches
through the going season.

Leaves leave tired trees,
they flop into breezes
in this gone season.
Some leaves hold.

They flap in the breeze.
Last time I felt this way
some leaves held—
the day he died.

Last time I felt—
he was young
on the day he died.
Gravity brought him down.

But he was young-gone—
he, a stemmed leaf,
gravity bringing him down
where he stayed,

dry-stemmed leaf,
last leaf scuffling in place.

There he stayed,
last leaf rustled downward.

STONE COLD

Knew I was finished, did I, when didn't
recall the oriole's seasonal notes,
orange flash over stone, when too grail-gone to
discern words. Faulty rightness had taken me
over then, torched all the blue-white houses,
charred their closed eyes. And all I gleaned was one
flawed axiom. Sooth! Would my *Was*, my *Did*,
in the fullness of stones, be lofted, cleansed?

Hill pinnacle—not one tree, bouyant leaf.
There arranged my menhirs as if they were
dancing hags, two-steps stringent as Christians'.
They cajoled, old stones, but I would not fuse
with them, knew I wanted shadow more than flash.
Showed valley to the ladies. *Did*. They gave up.

BIO:

More than 600 of Bertha Rogers's poems have been published in literary magazines, journals, and anthologies, and in several collections, among them *A House of Corners* (Three Conditions Press) and *Heart Turned Back* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland). Her translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*, was published in 2000 (Birch Brook Press); her translation of the Anglo-Saxon riddle poems from the Exeter Book, *Uncommon Creatures, Singing Things*, is forthcoming from Birch Brook Press. She is the founding director, since 1992, of Bright Hill Press and Literary Center in New York's Catskill Mountain Region.