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## As If Herbert Street Meant This

Robert Lietz

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# *As If Herbert Street Meant This*



Robert Lietz is a graduate of Le Moyne College and has an M.A. in Creative Writing from Syracuse University. He is the author of three books, with a fourth due out next year. Poems of his are scheduled to appear in *Chariton Review*, *Elkborn Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry*, and *Willow Springs*.

Up to sun through the thick drapes  
in the lower flat on Herbert, I listen  
to the knife sharpener or huckster  
practicing his loud cries, gliding  
upstreet behind wheel and bell  
or balanced on the board spanning  
the front of his roofed wagon.  
Syracuse, the Fifties. The horses ease  
along our street under the thick-leaved  
elms and maples. Wives appear  
on their front stoops calling out  
their orders. My shyness turns me back  
from glass. Jerked back and forward  
like a boy learning to drive standard,  
I see myself, striped shirt, corduroys,  
scratching touchdown plays on asphalt,  
a newspaper football spiralling toward  
an intersection end zone. Tonight,  
blue fire traces a split log, dances yellow  
and burns out. I listen to wind snap  
through the lilac branches. The iceman  
lumbers the open stairs up to our landlady.  
Listen to her thanks distilled  
from Krakow, to him in flannel pouring down  
those failing stairs, crossing Herbert  
to his wagon. I own what compression  
the years make of grassed front lawns,  
curbless urban streets. The faces and voices  
of that July become a mist and burden now,  
the racket of the coalchute on a Tuesday  
when I ought to be at school, or at  
Thanksgiving or at Christmas, snow paling  
coal and iron, compelling the broken line  
of a boy's sight to something marvelous,  
backing the boy from his cold window,  
the motion of his hands smoothing  
the goosebumps off his forearms.

—Robert Lietz