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David Ray

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Between Alp and Sea

Samuel Ray, 1965–1984



David Ray is a Professor of English at the University of Missouri—Kansas City, where he also edits the literary quarterly *New Letters*. The author of several books of poems and a collection of short stories, he has taught at a number of colleges, including Syracuse University.

I was preparing for the great blow
but did not know it, had simply driven
the old car up the mountain road, afraid
of the abyss all the time, thinking it was my
death that might come at any moment,
the fall, fire, the scorched body,
the hell of being alone. But safe
atop the mountain, I strolled the village,
had coffee in the Square, then found
a private ledge to view what stone age
man had waked to, many a dawn—blue valley
cut by river, silvered far below—
lazy scene at work, unmaking stone,
unmaking Alps, creating France.
And that stone age man,
out from his cave to squat, had left
clear word for me, along with the view
he loved. Prepare to abandon all,
he said, blue hills, the woman rubbed
till she gleams, and son you thought
safe over that sea, Oh happy happy son.

—David Ray