

JIM MOORE

In the Poems I Love

In the poems I love
there are sailboats
taking lonely Chinese poets away

from other lonely Chinese poets,
and from willow trees
along the shore,

barely rooted.
Falling petals in fall,
new blossoms as spring,

at long last, comes again.
Such clarity in the poems
I love, such mystery.

And when dawn comes at last
after a long, restless night
in the poems I love,

sometimes the poet will reveal,
with much relief, how small
we really are.

For a moment the poem stalls
while the poet laughs, thinks
to contrast the calm of the sky

to the unfairness of the universe,
a comparison that implies, without
saying a word,

the loneliness of it all.
In the poems I love,
no one is ever accused

of taking the curve
by the cemetery too quickly,
or of overlaborating

in the second stanza,
and no one is ever judged too lonely
for his own good. If it weren't

for loneliness, we might not need
to see the way a crow finally settles
on the top of a streetlight,

and stays still so long there,
just waiting for us to get it,
how ridiculously easy life is,

alike like this. And it's no small thing
to have seen the crow
in his sleek indifference,

his black pool
of unruffledness,
how he flew away, rising

all at once, not a trace of him remaining:
only the streetlight shining,
illuminating a small patch of darkness

inside the poems I love.

Jim Moore has had work in recent issues of the *Kenyon Review* and the *New Yorker*. He has work forthcoming in *Plume*. His most recent book is *Underground: New and Selected Poems*. He lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and in Spoleto, Italy.

TOM BOTTOMS

Cafe, Piazza San Marco, 2004
Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTO: RR JONES.