

Picnic on the Rappahannock / *Christel Reges*

We park the car roof-deep in hot green shadows
To the music of harsh birds and far-off water
Lock all the doors, roll up the dusty windows.

Wind, off the high near hills, leaps and batters
Against the sky-strewn silhouettes of oak.
We are nineteen years old, mall-weary daughters

Of the suburbs: thirsty, and our feet so hot--
Barefoot we bring hard cider, sweet pistachios
To the river, the river's sun-baked island rocks.

Below its battlements of brambles and wild roses
The shallow stream is swift, its voice is hushed and cold,
And its bed is gravely, skin-cutting sharp, and so

We don our socks. Were there eyes to see us? No one told.
Woods rose and spread around us, sentinel and green.
We wade out, we spread our socks to dry upon the stones.

And then our cotton sweaters and our jeans.
Stretch white skin against warm and whiter rocks.
Bask, and laugh, pour our complications into the Serene.

Gone, the jug we buried in the brambles. Gone the sock
That slipped into the river and turned flotsam. For my soul,
I can't remember where we parked, in which dusty copse of oak.

It hides, lost page of summer, safe from what we know
Is real: furtive innocence, flavored with apples and pistachio.
Burnt bright: white skin on whiter rocks, barbaric, heart-whole.