

ARCHEOLOGY

We keep improving
what we know of the past. Digging.
One yard deeper, flat like a cake layer, a hundred
years lies land-locked. The underworld allows no
mourning, no passions, only the earthen colors
of time crushed like dry leaves through dirt, only
stories and shattered pots silenced
in a common grave.

Downward, rearward, we find what earth
had not devoured. In the moist dark beneath
grass' seeds a tear-shaped jewel stone, a bulb,
a tooth, a dagger, a spider caught in amber
are scrutinized for secrets as if the past were
a cryptic prophecy we dreamed and fear
forgetting. And the past comes fragile and broken,
unwilling Lazarus unearthed

from what was left anonymous, behind;
a tin canister, a wine filled amphora,
an earthen jar half full with honey,
a broken bone, the rags of what once was
a spiffy uniform, a skulk entangled
in an old tree's roots. Most often we find
what remained unclaimed from armies gone
through wars and gravel; rusted buttons,
bayonets still sharp,

few broken pistols, arrows, medals. Sometime
we might remember soldiers' names and faces,
might still struggle to win their battles. We dig,
almost entomb ourselves, share the rain

and the grains' roots with the dead,
and from eternal ruins we build our past
with amulets, saints' relics,
to make this unmarked graveyard
a never-ending altar.