

THE SHELL

Christianne Balk

This evening, down
By the river road
I found a shell,
A cicada dead.
His eyes were coral,
And frozen wide,
Bright orange eyes
Stared right at me.
I picked him up,
So the insect sat
Poised on my palm,
As if alive
With olive armour
Hard as bone—
But he was light,
Light as a leaf.

His amber wings
Had two brown spots
Like leaded glass
Stained by smoke.
All black and green
The insect sat
All green with a black
Mask on his face.
And because of the mask
He seemed like one
Who hid his head,
A creature grown old,
Never tired of disguise.
And because of the moon
He seemed to glow
With phosphor inside.