

1991

Ceremony

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Recommended Citation

Bilgere, George. "Ceremony." *The Iowa Review* 21.2 (1991): 94-94. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4022>

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Three Poems · *George Bilgere*

CEREMONY

Cremation's aftermath
is not ash, but boney
stones, a gravel sharp
enough to cut the palm.
It is the weight my mother
held against me as we walked
on the beach last month
gathering small, empty shells.

Now I strew the dead
seeds in a field,
shards of that vessel
I am freed of again.

ALERT

All day the blue fairways of the bombers
rumbled with take-offs and approaches
though we grew used to it on our rambles
into the valleys full of orange groves
and eucalyptus trees where even owls
slumbering there in daylight no longer
flew when the gray smoldering angels broke
the sound barrier into shaking leaves.
At home we glued together model planes
and on the longest, heat-stunned days at school
the air drill sounded like rain, to set us
dreaming of a lone pilot looking down
at still cities ringing bells as he came
and we assumed the foetal position.