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Iowa City Sestina

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NELL REGAN

IOWA CITY SESTINA

This town is stitched by river—
that finds and winds its way through trees
whose leaves curl yellow—and every poem
is found to contain it, them, and cicada
call. Perhaps they too stand for longing
forded by an imagined Atlantic bridge.

Outside my window the bridge
of green, wrought iron spans the river
asks *what is there to miss?* It will not be long
love, till you find me under this tree
straining to describe the cicada
song that is shot through this poem.

Each avenue of the city, a walking poem
of considered views that yield to bridges
over which the chatter and clatter of cicada
curls and pulls time forward in a river-
ing flow while leaf considers tree
and the blue reflection of sky is longing

for river just as water is longing
for color much as word yearns for poem
or its echo in a lover's ear. The tree
stands alone, says *desire less*, bridge
with what you have here and the river
will carry to you all the cicada

pulse and call of a continent. Wish cicada
tymbal on the banks of all Iowas along
the Mississippi as it rivers
out through prairie, plain, and poem.

The pitched sough of the train that bridges
the night, freights stories of cornfield, of oak tree

to the city's gridded morning where trees
anoint the grass with shade, students read, cicada
conversations fade. Later, stepping to the bridge
the Capitol dome will throw its gold reflection, elong-
ating the reach of a September dusk where a poem
or thought might constellate. Deep in the river

open-mouthed carp gape up at trees, long
branches pooling on its ceiling while cicada-poem
clicks, calls forth a silent bridge to span the river.