

Two poems by Professor Robert Canzoneri

The Unloved

When I would squat by holes and piles of dirt
crumbling clods, ready to insert
bare roots of shrubs, she'd soil my vegetable dreams:
this adolescent dog approaching albino
would worm under my arm with motive I know
too but bury in pride, curl both head
and tail toward me begging to be fed
love at both extremes.

Neither was an end unto itself, or
small dogs one might do as well for;
a car front struck her fore part like a match
that spurts red fire and dies, curdled a batch
of blood out from one end and knocked
oval feces out the other. Shocked,
arrested at the waste, I swore a herbist
vow; but now I felt the still unserved
bitch for lack of pulse and breath. I coiled
her limp into a hamper, saw it soiled
with drying blood. She stiffened in a curl,
never having learned a nicer girl
could hope to stay unspaded, yet behave.
With too much heat I dug a rounded grave.

One Lion, Once

Ho, Androcles!
What do you say went on
From when the lion scratched off in the dust
Toward you as meat and bone
And, roaring to his lean and hungry guts
The end of grumbling wait,
Bore down? What shifted in those preying eyes
As, closing, you grew featured
And the features made a face? What lies
Would not reach truth too late
But failed the heated lion's sight, as face

Became not one man's meat,
But Androcles?
We could ask Plato, looking back, to place
The abstract qualities
Of this into a scheme: how many rungs
Of love a beast can seize
In one great charge, to land (with rasping lungs
And flesh starved to his bones)
Muzzling like a milk-fed cat at ease
Against you on your knees.