

# The White Dogs Of West Emerald Street

*by* John Riley

I wondered if Mr. Slane even knew  
how many dogs he owned,  
there were so many of them behind the locked gate,  
tiny white dancers all with the same face,  
and though they were yappy I wanted to hold one  
or maybe two and feel them wiggle in my arms  
although I knew there was no chance  
we would be allowed beyond the gate.  
Aunt Margaret had no time for them  
as she waited for Mr. Slane to return home  
to press her case,  
holding the same pose she had held the day  
she stood in her own grass  
that grew thick because she nursed it  
with so much more diligence  
than any other family living  
in the rentals on the street  
was willing to do, waiting  
to swing her broom to drive away  
the ownerless, pregnant dog  
that she called a shameless strumpet,  
determined to send her packing  
before the puppies were dropped  
in the crawl space beneath the house  
or even worse under the stoop.

