*My Room*

My room  
My haven  
My block of peace  
in a hectic world  
  
My room  
My own personal disaster area  
of piled clothing and blaring music-  
of comfortable chaos  
  
My room  
My harbor of fantasies  
“Gee whiz, Ace, what kinda room is this?” asked Ace’s detective’s sidekick  
“I don’t know,” Ace replied, “but I like it.”  
  
My room  
My ongoing rationalization  
Joe’s brain: Joe’s room is messy  
Joe: What’s new?  
  
My room   
My responsibility  
the subject of many   
“Go clean yours”  
  
My room   
My prison  
the subject of many   
“Go to yours”  
  
My room  
My cubicle of terror  
zone of nightmares  
shelter of my angst  
  
My room   
My haven  
My organized chaos

My ongoing rationalization  
My responsibility  
My harbor of fantasy  
My prison  
My terror  
My block of peace   
in a hectic world

*--Joe Powning*

*I Once Knew a Girl*I once knew a girl who  
  
ran through the fields barefoot,  
played tag on weekends,  
and woke with the sun at six.  
She loved school  
and never brushed her hair.  
She slept with Teddy  
and went to bed with the night light on.  
  
Now  
she paints her toenails green,  
reads upstairs on weekends,   
and dozes till eleven.  
She finds school a bore  
and spends hours in the bathroom.  
Teddy is under her bed,   
and she sleeps in darkness.  
  
That girl is gone.

*--Nora Bradford*

***Shelter***

Then suddenly you were back.  
I saw you glance at the card  
hung at my gate–  
 a false name, a date of arrival,  
otherwise a blank  
 no age, no history,  
 nothing,  
that would let you know  
I would stay with you forever  
and never go.

You leaned your face into the fence  
curling your hand through the wires,  
 blinking in the sun.  
(Neither one of us so young  
in the bright, Spring light  
yet wanting to be.)

I let one paw  
hover in the air  
but looked away,  
not wanting to show my eagerness,  
 but wanting  
to find a way to tell you  
that I would be a good dog  
and how much I wanted to be owned.  
(A dog is only half himself  
without a master.  
Unfinished, half-alive)

I could not move  
 nor speak  
but when you dropped to your knees  
and reached two fingers toward my fur  
I let myself fall  
(oh god I could not help myself)  
letting my body form the words  
 head back, eyes closed  
 throat exposed,  
 legs flailing in the air.  
“Please,” I said. “Yes, please.  
Take me. Yes.”

*– Scout, as written by R. S. Jones*

You paused outside  
to look into my cage.  
I tried to play it right  
wanting to catch your eye  
with a shy glint in my own,  
 a soft bark,  
that said, “Choose me,”  
in a canine grammar  
I hoped you’d understand.

Your face held nothing  
(Pity, maybe)  
that let me believe  
you would ever want  
a dog like me.

You turned once,  
twice,  
a hundred times,  
coming and going  
the length of my cage.  
(Coming and going  
like you do now,  
ten times a day.)  
Then walked away.

I could not stand another day of  
strangers coming to stare.  
Passing me over for younger dogs who  
knew too little to have the strange  
 look of longing  
I could not keep from my eyes.

I could not stand another night  
alone in that place  
 the cracked cement floor  
 the howls and whines that kept me sleepless  
(Did you know that sound is still the one I hear  
when you wake me kicking from dreams  
sleeping in your bed?)