*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?)