

# **After Rilke**

**Richard Deming**

Once, the summer seemed an unending,  
    an unspoken syllable  
but now it lays shadows across sundials  
and the wind steps from the field grass.

Your throat, because of the slow pollen, begins to close  
and the voice is no longer recognizably  
    your own.

    In the arbor,

last fruits swell and bend their branches;  
the sun offers a few final days of light,  
before hurrying apples and grapes to one more ripening and  
    then, one day soon, the sweetness of heavy wine.

It's time.

Whoever now has no home will build no more,  
as things will become other things, like a translation that forgets,  
word for pallid word,  
    how rivers flow only one way.

Whoever is now alone will remain so,  
    and, being alone, will wake each day into a dread quiet.  
        Some times the eyes  
        open in a foreign place and to  
read or write long letters  
        is a geometry  
for sleeplessly wandering streets and alleyways  
    late into the night  
        as leaves rasp across asphalt.