

**IN A LIGHT TIME** by Philip Levine

The alder shudders in the April winds  
off the moon. No one is awake and yet  
sunlight streams across  
the hundred still beds  
of the public wards  
for children. At ten  
do we truly sleep  
in a blessed sleep  
guarded by angels  
and social workers?  
Do we dream of gold  
found in secret trunks  
in familiar rooms?  
Do we talk to cats  
and dogs? I think not.  
I think when I was  
ten I was almost  
an adult, slightly  
less sentimental  
than now and better  
with figures. No one  
could force me to cry,  
nothing could convince  
me of God's concern  
for America  
much less the fall of  
a sparrow. I spit  
into the wind, even  
on mornings like this,  
the air clear, the sky  
utterly silent,  
the fresh light flooding  
across bed after  
bed as though something  
were reaching blindly --  
for we are blindest

in sunlight -- for hands  
to take and eyelids  
to caress and bless  
before they open  
to the alder gone  
still and the winds hushed,  
before the children  
waken separately  
into their childhoods.