

Requiem in Gray by Anne Cheilek

A jilt in the strip between
curb and heel, monoxide-cured,
piss-pickled, the skeleton
of an alder. Silver skin
cracked down to dun, brittle
sky sticks strung with pearly
preening fruit. As little living
mourners fluff and peck,
leafless limbs stir.
Such loyal brutes
to tender the extinct this shiver
of an afterlife.
Like these words, nesting
in the ribs of last
year's madness.