

The Sunflower Miners

By Mark Oreskovich

Those sacred windows pointed at the top
I learned, today, are *lancets*.
And there are lancets, a stone's throw east of
The two-lane highway to Gardner.
In the solitary shell of a church.
Miners imported that Gothic touch:
Old World to Promised Land.
Their new world now is ancient again.

Were those windows clear,
Or did stained glass
Shower the booted, bonneted brides,
The handlebar grooms with coal-dust nails?
And what small souls were baptized between?
Was there a dance-hall or saloon next door?
Or was it the dentist? The company store?
Was that church the hub
From which the once-town's spokes proceeded?
Today, it reminds that hubs and spokes decay,
And yet, consumer off to cabin, I cannot look away
Because I know I've neither desire nor skill
To build an altar that would last a high-desert century.

How unlike cynical, doubting me,
Were those immigrant hands that sought their solace
Not in square-topped, finite frames,
But rather in arced and graceful lines,
Ever pointing, ever tracing, upward.

How like sunflowers,
Those evaporated miners:
Rooted in darkness, deep-staked underground,
They dreamed, and they leaned, toward heaven.