

# John Wood

## A Sestina for Mishima

“the sweet drop of honey that was Time”

Yukio Mishima

Wheat, sun, honey, gold, light, amber: these are the words held in the amber of memory. They stir in dreams of wheat swaying in bright and attic light. They rustle on slow dialed days as the sun glories down like golden bees humming of honey, those days held in the honeycomb of life's bright amber, days of our making but out of a time of gold, when all is seen as abundant wheat, as sun and summer light. And we are like those bees lighting in time's honey, drinking the nectar of life's harvest, suddened into joy as the sun quickens in winter, as amber charges the touch, as wind-whipped wheat sweeps our sight, and gold sets our lusts in shimmered gold-flecked light falling on wheat, on the honeyed sheaves rising under an amber sun. And then when that sun glows like gold and electromed amber, when it throbs with the light's rhythmed waves, who could refuse the dense, darkling honey of love, or loaves made from the thrusting wheat? Who could allow the sun's canticles or the choring wheat eclipse? Not even age can debase such gold, for lost light always glows in the ambered hold of Time's honey.

---

**John Wood** is a poet, art critic, and photographic historian. Allen Ginsberg wrote the introduction to his first book, which was published in his early twenties. His next two books of poetry, *In Primary Light* and *The Gates of the Elect Kingdom* both won the Iowa Poetry Prize and were published by University of Iowa Press, and his *Selected Poems 1968-1998* was published by the University of Arkansas Press. His newest book *Endurance and Suffering* is published by the German press Edition Galerie Vevais. He co-curated the 1995 Smithsonian Institution/National Museum of American Art exhibition *Secrets of the Dark Chamber*, and his book based on the exhibition was a *New York Times Book Review* Best Books of 1995. He has written and edited some 25 books, and his essays have been translated in Japanese, German, Italian, Greek, and Spanish. The *Southern Review* called him “the most lucid and engaging of the post-modern Southern poets.”

“My front porch, which curves around our house, overlooks the Saxtons River, which can always be heard rushing and roaring down below us, except in winter when it's frozen over. Last spring under a washed-out tree on the banks of the river, poet/photographer John Metoyer, here for a visit, discovered three strange, possibly ancient, sandstone heads, which now rest together on a side of the porch. You can look up from the porch at a mountain, prosaically called Hartley Hill, and from another angle down Pleasant Valley Road, which runs into the main street of the village of Saxtons River. Other than in the winter, I'm on that porch every afternoon and many evenings. It may be the title of an old song, but 'moonlight in Vermont' is not like any other light I've ever seen.”