

## *Compost*

RAVI SHANKAR

Filling a tarp full of spindled elm leaves  
that cling and loosen in wake of dragging,  
I stumble over frost-bitten lawn yawing

behind the yard into unbounded county  
land where once dark falls ember-eyed  
raccoon emerge to stride to the very lip

of the forest green high-impact garbage can,  
where minutes molder the shape of cored  
fruit, print ads, slightly fetid plastic bags—

all torn loose and strewn this winter night  
I cannot sleep. Where I thought I was safest,  
alone with stars and a rake, I'm startled.