

THE BOWL OF POSSIBLE PEAS

it took me a long time to learn to call them peas
today I slipped up surprised after years
of using the right word
saying:
I'm going to have more beans do you want any
and my wife either not hearing
or finally resigned to my word
said no

peas to me are pods filled with round balls of bright green
that we'd grow in our truck patch
not the black eyed sort that I now eat
every first day of january

for good luck
she said with determination and certainty
as she stirred the pot of beans now peas
on our first new year's in 1971
we have to eat black eyed peas
on new year's day

my childhood was green
rows of corn
fields of soybeans
a garden of
carrot tops
sweet potato vines
tomato plants
and pea pods getting ready for snapping

her growing up was brown
the color of skin segregated
to city playgrounds worn too thin

i ran free in a green world
dashing barefoot between rows of field corn
the sharp edged leaves slicing at my shins

knowing nothing of black eyes by any name
or how one must never forget
to seek the luck needed
to get through another year

John Sherman