

THE 2017 JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE



JORDAN FRANKLIN

Black Boy

After "Glenn" by Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1985

The choleric shakes
of his reprimand careen
from thought to larynx. His
love is mayhem; it sparks the
ritual burning of branched
fingers once plump with olives.
When the whistling stops, the
tree must relearn its true weight
and dislodge his tired,
dark fruit. Fire is his
sacrament, its home the stoked
back of his throat. His crown
of barbed wire forms a brooch
across his neck—His fruit,
not even the starved birds
will eat.

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