

## POEM

### The Time Eaters

Richard Bronson

We have to live here for ever.  
Think of what for ever means!

*Back to Methuselah*  
G B Shaw

What sets the internal clock of species,  
regulates the rapid beat of rodents,  
slow pendulum stroke of pachyderms?  
A dog is born, dies in the breath of a boy's years.

I searched skeletal remains of millennial men,  
an archeology of bone. The cyclic give and take  
of osteoblast, osteoclast confirmed the biblical chronologies,  
as arboreal rings mark seasons of Sequoias.

In ancient DNA, a taxonomy of telomeres,  
I found the answer —  
a retroviral presence, the *chronophage*,  
passed through generations.

In the Cave of the Patriarchs, a wind  
out of Eden touched my face.  
Quarantined in their Garden,  
Adam and Eve lived eternal lives —

caught mortality, the slow descent  
to untimely death  
as they departed  
into the world.

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\* Richard Bronson's collection of poetry *Search for Oz* is published by  
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