

Swallows

My home is on the edge of a great precipice.
Time falls away below.

Sky to skim from, moths on the wing,
the last mosquitoes rise from a drying creek.

When I am parched, your flight
sates my thirst, flurries of speech, music.

When I am lonely, I need only listen.

Sometimes right outside my window.
Sometimes along the cliff-edge of river.
I'm here because your home is also my home.

It is hard enough to leave you,
but if you left first what would fall
and what would fall apart?

Leaves from trees, last year's cuttings,
clouds into wheat's unending forgetfulness.

Hudson Bay Blanket

As white as the sound and fury
of gulls as green as fathoms unfolding
sun as yellow as a yolk feeling as blue
as a room with a television as black
as a kettle over campfire as plastic
as beads melting into buckskin
as gunpowder as scalps as horseflesh
as red as grief brought to a dry boil
how wool made of steel scours immunity.

Manifest

So, too, have I slipped into and out of odd jobs
like clothing from day to day. Some winters, wearing
five layers, some summers, just waders,
but always these years wear thread-thin
and buttons find their way into pockets, forgotten.
It is not that I'm lazy, just mad for not listening.
Mad for rivers made more and more distant
the more people keep them private and hidden.
The first madness is joy, the second, forbidden.
The third madness you cannot come back from.
I like the weight of a tailgate's worn metal.
A table. Notes of dust and magnesium chloride. Spilled beer.
I like the feel of slamming it home. I'm certain
of it unlike the click of a car door. I'm certainly
guilty as everyone else who drives highways
of animals left in the ditch. But rivers, I miss you.
The way blood in a living body must to return to the heart.

Rabbit in the Copse

Fur the color of understory, stiller than air,
a twitch of your ear caught my attention.

Stringy grand fir trunks, branches almost impenetrable.

Hidden in the grass, nestled among twin flowers,
along fallen logs, morels.
My faith in stillness, my fear a blur.
Tightly wound, ready to be sprung, to dash away.

Once, while traveling through another country,
I came across a rabbit half broken by tire,
pulling at the gravel.

Stopped for a moment, four tires.
Then reversed until it lay still.

Inertia, intent. We stare at one another
through branches
where I have bent down with my knife,
rich smell of earth, droplets of water,
honeycombed before me.

Surely if I part the branches, one of us will disappear.

Survival is faith distilled, warrants a loneliness
except for soft blades of grass and clover,
thickening blossoms of rain.

For Loki

You either ride a horse, or you don't ride a horse.
Get knocked off the horse, which means
to fall off, which means not
getting back on again. And when you don't
get on again, and you hear the chain, and the horse
is drug down, and you are drug down
and on your breath is horse, and all you want is horse
then maybe you'll break and get back on again.
The horses I've ridden have not wanted me on their backs
because I've always been somewhere else.
Some empty pages, some pages left empty.
Afraid to go back, but not afraid to ride.
Even so, horses know what to do with us.
We rise like dust from the hooves of the wind.