

Waiting to be Realized

I was young before my mother died
not that young but didn't know it
then my father died and I was not young anymore
and I knew it

and their lives played out in front of me
as if I was the one dying and watching a life before my eyes
I see them in black and white
before they knew me
thin and sweet-faced
they knew hard times but not yet how hard

I remember them young
the scent of my father my mother's black eyelashes
and when I ease onto my own sheets
and open the book beside my bed
or when the sharp wind whips
my collar

I know they experienced the same

there is something in this knowing

A Quiver of Cobra, A Murder of Men

along a chain of bobolinks
in the wake of buzzards
amidst a bouquet of pheasants
under a gaze of raccoons

an idle of politicians
and a mob of corporations
a murmuration of poor
in a shiver of homeless

flies a storytelling of ravens
a pity of doves
a glint of goldfish
with a parliament of owls

comes an army of wealth
masks of riot gear
a plutocracy of states
malignant growths of war

while a charm of finches
a dazzle of zebra
a tribe of goats
sleep with a bed of eels

under a storm of abusers
a terror of bigots
a school of shooters
and stories of enemies

a wisdom of wombats
a gulp of cormorants
an army of caterpillars
a memory of elephants

ask how much longer?

Jayus

accidents happen
closest to home
one last orange blossom beer
and the stoop's last step
twists your ankle
on what's supposed to be the landing

turns out home is for sloppy punchlines

ill-timed quick jabs and sideways
glances that slip down the wrong-way
you forget the pause
the one that leaves the audience hanging

off start beginnings- you slept with who?
confused middles – maybe if you just bought a red convertible
quick endings – grandma died at the casino in Deadwood?

you can't help but laugh
as the bad-timed baby
coos up at you with eyes like stars

Jayus: Indonesian word – a joke so poorly
told and so unfunny that one cannot help but
laugh

While Away the Hours

While I swam with a manatee
While I touched an ancient back
While I felt Florida sun on my legs
While it was February
While in NYC Philip in February
Put a needle to his arm

While I walked two dogs
While I felt sunny Santa Fe on my scalp
While I worried monies through my mind
While I wondered the rest of my years
While in California Robin in August
Put a rope around his neck

While once a man without money or fame
While I sat drinking coffee
Told me of research and practice
Of tying rope
To hang from a rafter
While an I-Beam would work too

While I swallowed the coffee
While the man said he kept the noose near
for comfort of owning a way out
While another man decided to use a knife
While he didn't die
While an old woman hanged herself

While they cut her down
While fingernail marks covered
her neck above the rope mark
While she was tall
with a long soft neck

Grandma Didn't Die In the Corvair

she waited till her
black Irish brows grayed
after she'd wandered town
looking for tiny girls
she thought were lost
stopping at the man who sold cars
to inquire about the girls

he had no arms
but a finger grew from the place his arms
should be
a thalidomide baby grandmother said
and I imagined thalidomide man
holding girls so tiny he curled one finger
around their waists and when he turned
his head he was eye to eye with them
and when he looked forward
they stared at the moles on his neck
and hoped he wouldn't drop them

now grandma seems like a dream
offering gingersnaps
and workbooks to do while
my tonsils shrink

wait long enough and dead people
are dreams you can't quite grasp
and only remember
when something in the day reminds
like someone says icebox instead of frig

and then your mother is old and dies
and you remember two women
getting old and then they die
though they once
ate brownies and tied their shoes
in the wind