

## The Fallen Oak

The small man brings an axe on the tree trunk  
Each blow brings our tree closer to a *thump*  
But the nestled squirrel, the pecking  
blue jay, the slow caterpillar all heckled  
down to the axe man who hawked no  
such gripes amid the tumbling leaves  
of Fall. A council assembles far above the whacks,  
like bottles, cinderella houses swirled together  
in the storm-ridden Pacific while rain pebbles,  
Animals once enemies now friends,  
all hope to save their lovely great oak  
from the axe man somehow so stoked  
to tear down the tree rooted deep beneath his feet—  
the city of Troy, the walls mudded in earth complete—  
Drudging once and for all in a sudden heap.  
Forever the jay, the squirrel, the crushed caterpillar,  
never cross paths again, scamper to a near fir.

## Someone I Knew

The unnamed man, whose fate:  
A bird snared in spite of its  
flowered wings; a likely victim.  
The man unbeknownst to all, but I,  
I know him as Donny from Durham,  
He who must feel the air to fully breathe it,  
touch the sky to finally believe it.  
Donny and I seldom convene  
between where the pens pringle  
and the great whites cackle.  
There we hear the courtly slaps of wisdom  
See many fishing for Donny's ears,  
returning again, and once more, just for  
the hooks to skate his scaly skin.  
We reach out our open hands to fend  
those close enough to taste us—for us  
to taste them, But  
all we smell is the mellow butter  
of Donny's hooked ears.  
Should the jackhammer jolt, we reason,  
the knees must scamper solemnly away.  
But the sifted sky—Donny's hands  
forever staining the bloodied heavens—  
will never be enough for his wings aghast,  
his now-vacated bronchioles.  
Now, I, vanquished by hooks for another man,  
I just hope to fish the mellow great whites,  
reeled into their forever festive flails.

Balk

Every awkward talk, every morning walk, whenever  
We come to an end, “tick tock”: to Sunday

The cycle—a hamster with never faltering legs—pauses  
At last, now we’re brought by the clock to Sunday.

Adieu or anew, all else is a scramble of days,  
How could we now mock Sunday?

But fear does enter me, when the hour hand  
Finally does lock down Sunday,

For another struggle, more trouble, hiccups like  
A pitcher’s balk, all our nicks owed to Sunday.

## A Sailor's Secret

Nothing is Pete in the eyes of today's  
Passenger, a well-to-do lady.  
She looks beyond, unimpressed by Pete's  
Rigging of the small boat, his early  
Sprint to the dock, barely  
Beating the thrash of the morning tide.  
But you, Pete, you see past the lady's gaze,  
You've touched the mountains and beyond,  
The snowed peak your common companion  
Brushing against your burly bristled mustache.

These same whites you'll don tonight,  
Swap your sailor's hat for a frayed scarf,  
And nothing will the townsmen know  
Of your journey aloft.  
The blue woman—by now, surely—  
Has reached the shore across,  
Her wares intact but not her soul.  
Many a time have you done those dressed such,  
And all reach the same creviced cove.

You must only leave the comb,  
That morning's comb, forever  
Attached to the victim's dome,  
Indeed they'd find you, your mustache's  
Strands traced back to your cot,  
But, no, that's not to be—  
What you do is right. The shores  
Forever cover your trace, a curtain  
Closes the stage at last.

## The Chambered Zoo

All the anger animals amalgamate  
Beyond just the birds, bats, bees,  
Clamoring could cause some chaos, couldn't it?  
Daunting deep down under the adorned dove  
Even Ebenezer earths, etched between each eel  
Forever forgotten from the fateful frigid fall.  
Grinches galore, grinning ghastly ghosts  
Hunchback hammers and haughty horses.  
I ideate in these imagined illusions,  
Jostling, jeering among the junk and jags.  
Kicking kangaroos kill, how could I  
Hallucinate that leaves down here lack life?  
Morning, morning, morning—mourning maybe, no morning.  
Never, not ever night kneels to the naughty next.  
Omens orchestrate the homage to the often ornate ones,  
Piling poorly but plentifully past the porridge.  
Query you may how the quills quest quietly,  
Wretched rotting retroactive radiants, recharging the porridge  
Something stirs the suffering, skulled species spinning in the mix  
Tightly tethering together the tongued beasts.  
Under which, urged by the hundreds,  
Vexed vultures, very varied hover  
Where wary willful wonders wane,  
Xenia is a deluxe in this hell box,  
Yonder yearn the yearly yolks,  
A zealous zoo zipping, a maze.