

Songs Early and Late

I – Uprising

On earth there was
a voice that sang:

we are on the earth
and we are
the earth
itself
standing up,

in the world
and of it,

of
what
the world's of
too.

II – Lament of Poor Use

Oh, earth, as we in our flailing
snag each strand of species
and pull until it comes
out of your head by the root—

as we stopper and scar the follicles—

as we make of your forest
a farm fit for the mills
but not for the panthers,

is it true that you become
less beautiful?

Life After Electricity?

On the beach, another species,
half human or something like it,
periodically watches the sun go down.

It doesn't happen every night.
When it does, after sunset, they empty
what they have seen into the sand.

It accepts everything that bothers them.
Leaves them turning to one another
as if wrongs were pains of growth.

They have learned to wash in saltwater
and see clearly. They have learned
to walk home by the moon.

One of their young has a flashlight
buried where he sleeps. He dreams
of power. He is afraid to use it.

Proximity

The rabbit parts, taken out of the context of the rabbit,
will sit on the counter in their juices, hinting at stew,
and they will look good and hale and nutritious to him,
and they will look like awful, bloody murder to her.

And the differences will hang between them,
not as something to be fought over,
but as something there and real and true.

Something that binds if it does not break apart,
for they will not resolve their differences;
the resolution will come in the way
their differences lie up against one another in the night.

They Used to Be Things

In the book were pages
and on the pages was ink
and in the ink were words

that were once ideas
we made of things, like
wool is made of a goat

and a sweater is made
of wool, and warmth
is made of wool's

trappings, and favorite
is made of our time
in the warmth.

The story goes
that the ideas
went away and formed

their own tribe. Then, they
forgot to come back
and visit; they forgot

the way home. Over time
they even forgot
where they came from,

and the more distant
the words grew
from their origin,

the more the words
tried to become things
themselves. But words

are not even the pale
shimmerings on
the butterfly's wings,

let alone the thin
translucence
flapping itself up.

When the wolfwind
howls and the ground
whispers crystals of ice,

if I wrap my feet
in ideas—lots and lots
of them—they still freeze.

Even newspaper leaves
them stiff and shivering
through the night.

Late Night Possibilities

I

You could fall asleep while driving,
your neck dripping with sweat
in the late September heat.

II

You could have a dream of going somewhere quickly,
of horns and flashing lights trying to guide you
safely toward your destination.

III

You could waver between
the dream state and waking state
where sparks shower your face
from the side of the car
shearing the guard rail,
the guard rail shearing the car.

IV

Your foot could become
heavy with sleep
and your hands could fall
away from the wheel
and your body could plow
into the night
with no concern for laws or lanes
or the mother deer
trying to herd her young
safely to the other side.

V

You could be seduced awake
by 75 mph winds
whistling something dangerous in your ear
and you could reach for the wheel
like the belly of a lover who's leaving you too soon
and you could pull her back to you
only to spin around three times
and flip over twice—earth-sky, earth-sky.

VI

You could wake your friend
in the passenger seat
to tell him what happened.

VII

You could pull your other friend
from the screaming hole
in the broken back window
with blood
and glass in flesh
and no one to blame but yourself
for listening to your mind
when it said *it's time*
you're tired
I know what I'm doing
listen
it's time to go.