

NEST STUDY #1

The nest in dead branches is not an empty nest:
rimed over with questions and brimful with winter,
unperturbed by the wind that threatens to whisk it
from the place where it was made, needed, abandoned.

A room woven of leavings--red thread and tinsel--
bound up for a season and slowly dispersing.
To come home each day to such finely tuned debris:
I'm sure now, here, that I could make do as a bird.

To slip between currents and make of wind a home,
knowing every dwelling is weightless as your bones
and temporary as the blood that stirs about
your labyrinth, the headlong chambers of your heart.

NEST STUDY #2

We built it of bottle caps and rusted barbed wire,
of green plastic army men abandoned on the beach.

We built it of sanded down seaglass, of seedpods,
of cow skulls revealed when the snow melts, pure and bleached.

We scavenged five-cent cans from culverts,
traded cap erasers for small stones,

caught frogs and fed them the right kinds of flies,
named them after villains, after heroes.

Maybe somewhere we saved up all the chewed stems
of the leaves of grass we plucked, sucking for sweet,

the buttercups we shone on chins,
the dandelions we unleashed,

propelled by whistles, pirouettes,
as we learned how our bodies,

their hither-thither breath and limbs,
could be the origin of wind.

WHATEVER'S LEFT

You need to stop reading.

The languor of someone else's structures
holds nothing, offers all the sustenance
of stone,
of floating.

You need to stop reading.
You need to change your gaze.

The words of others are not made
to hold your days,
the heat and strife and anguish
of your living living body.

Your body.

You are made
to contain and expel,
to hold and to tell
to go forth and put forth and hold forth and hold worth--

How to measure the worth
of a moment snagged from time?
How to measure the worth
of the hook, of the line?

It may all come to nothing.

How to frame the invisible,
make its elegance plain.

It will all come to nothing.

You need to change the gaze.

Double vision--not enough.
A singular vision--not enough.

Is it enough after dark

to feel the heat of the day
come up through the soles of your feet?

Enough to taste
the heart of the matter,
tongue its bloody pulp?

Enough to say you've tasted it?

Someday the heat will drain
from all the promises you've made
and whatever's left
will be printed
on someone else's page.

HAPPY HERE

an onion
an avocado overripe
stray garlic skins
and coffee grounds

a lingering smell of bleach
so deep in your skin
you can't scrub it out

sooty footprint from the peppermill
sweaters half knit with dog hair
fly shit speckling the windowsills

the grit of a year's worth of days
a day's worth of years
greying itself into your bare feet
a promise you'd be happy here

white mug half black with stale coffee
not enough room in a single sentence
for *happy* and *here* to coexist

here the cupboard full of nothing
where the mice like to shit
and over there the sack of rice
fifty dollars worth of rice
dribbling onto the floor
mingling with dead skin and flies' wings
the little bastards chewed a hole in it
keep coming back for more

failing fluorescence overhead
broken clock blinking an impossible time
and you struggling to remember the shape of the world
before the matter of *yours* and *mine*

sour milk smell from the fridge
cream you never bother with
cream you keep for guests you never have

do you long for the days
the fugitive days
the promiseless places
empty cities
cities full of cold winds
colder faces

was it easier
it was

what is home but a ratsnest
a roach motel
a mad dog thrashing at the gate
to be let out