

Detour

For Kady

You wander a side road just for once,
drive past barns, past silos ringing full
hollow until you reach the lone home
fronted by a lawn spiked with boney rock.

Maybe postcards aren't a cheat. A stream
washes clear, cold, smooth across stones.
Fence posts bend back corn stalks, bugs
scuttle dirt, and wind twists violets at your feet,

but then dead fish, bellies up, flash silver
in sunlight. The only rest-stop picnic table
is empty, an angled skeleton on its side.
Dead tree limbs droop leaves into shore waters
that once rose too high. You know you are
you and that detours always turn human.

The Metaphysics of Sparrows

Sparrows
nervous
as San Antonio wind

dip inside
low brick walls
to tables and concrete.

Indifferent,
beautiful
as my waitress,

they flit and peck
and eat my crumbs.

Their beaks
are hard
so are
their black
unblinking
eyes.

I am brick
to them
or mesquite.

Bread is everything,
so is wind

The Wisdom of the Desert

I dream a Corvette,
red, of course, running
asphalt hard, the tach redlining
across a desert where neon
skies the night horizon.

I push the pedal harder,
go farther into the desert.
My calf aches, the Corvette
bleeds out until it's white,
but I don't fade into the sky.

Out here distances remain
permanent, but I have
to stop sometime. An old man,
eyes empty, beard white, stumbles
from behind the vacant
gas station and stares
into the neon horizon.

*Is it Moses maybe,
or some holy man?
Will he speak holy words,
a truth to suspend the night,
a truth to end Egypt and
Los Vegas, and finally
bring the revs down?*

But it's no sandled monk
blinded by a burning bush.
He asks for 5 bucks instead,
and says "Cheap wine is not so cheap."

Sagebrush, grit, and dying sky,
the BP sign swaying in the wind,
rusty metal grating on metal.
Monks don't come here.

It's all about friction,
coefficients of friction,
old men's throats dryly squeaking,
the bitching of the wind,
how nothing lets me in.

While You Sleep

For Christina

In the strobe of TV over bare hip,
I see alluvial flood plains outside
Billings. There, hills and dirt were real.
So was water. It rolled through them once,
a warm, long, and now invisible wave.
Only some hollow, scooped out curves remain.
Once I wanted to stop, ask for more time, kiss dirt,
confess my sins, make a clean break from me,
then say goodbye to the Olds that brought
me there. Now, I would have no end to me
if I could dip my fingers into your
impossible dirt, but one more night,
another dark comes too soon with sad apologies.
Then I know that random thoughts may be more
than random, that tide rolls in twice a day
for everyone not just Hugo's sad Raymond.
Your hip is real, so is my tongue,
so is the soft intake and outgo of breath.
Each day is a day, each touch a touch.

A Black Puppy

blind-rolls
onto his back,
one lung gone,
or two perhaps,
air thick as water.

“No gravitas,”
says a professor.
“Don’t care.
Pathos. Bathos.
Give it a name,”
he demands.

The world blurs
darker. Shadows
smear my shadow.
This light
is the last light.

But science stays
the same. Air turns
to water; my eyes
will go gray-gummed,
red-rimmed, then blink
slowly opaque.

I know then.
No matter
what was said,
Aristotle got it wrong.