

Five Birdsongs in the Rain

Emeralds, Gold, and Honey

Through the emerald distance
Zwischen ich und du
Signals, signs, and ciphers
Glide like grateful weary birds,
Returning wiser from the icy blue.

I'll shake this candy from my head
You'll aspire to greater deeds
We will purge our gold of lead
And watch the horizon intertwined,
Surfers drinking in the promise of the line.

This unseemly crack
Where it's been said the light gets in
I will eat its rays for breakfast
You will shower pink and naked in its glow,
Unprepared for the secrets of the day.

Our honey drips slowly
Concrete shoes, and skirts of glue.
We would have devoured this road already
If it weren't so coy and shy
But if tamed, might yield the sweetest prize.

Sunshine Ghosts

On a road close to home, in the noon sun
During my lunch break which won't last long
I see the fleeting art on the asphalt flicker.
The trees, sun, and road dance while I drive
Leaving shadows to die in my wake.

Hold your breath when you pass a graveyard
My children were taught by someone to say.
And if they were with me now at noon
In my car, that is exactly what they would do
Until the last grave passes or they pass out.

Later they would see the decayed shrine
So small and now faded, to remember a driver
Who drove ahead and stopped forever
At the turn of a road which maybe became
A turn in the road for the ones left behind.

But my kids aren't with me today, it's just me
As I then drive under an old trestle bridge,
An old rusted span across a damp creek
From where not long ago a teen made his fate,
Unable to go on, in a way I could once relate.

Finally, I arrive at a beautiful old farmhouse
Which no longer hosts the dead farmer,
Long gone and that won't be remembered.
There are no ghosts here, just my therapist.
How about we talk about my childhood today?

My Mother's Song

I save the tickets from events and places I visit
In a box that belonged to my mother in her youth.
The old box is one of the things that remain.

I save tickets to remember my life
Though I don't recall how it started
Or what compelled me to not forget that way.

I could have instead written lines like these
As breadcrumbs to find my way back.
To recall in the future, for example, my mother.

But my mother won't live in the future,
So it's a regret I will try to find my way away from.
And why did I never write about her like this?

In the box with my clump of memory tickets
Is a pouch with her old charm bracelet,
From the days when she was young.

Twenty tinkling memories spaced across the chain,
Charms of states my mother visited, Cyprus Gardens,
Tiki idols, St. Louis Zoo, Harrison High, and Honest Abe.

My mother's memories twinkle more than mine
And the tinkle of the metal is like a song,
And with that song, I know her now in a way I won't forget.

It's Like a Sudden Pop

I am a balloon, red, and recently left the hand
Now an untethered being and detached
From you, them, who once was us, and we.
An astronaut too far from the capsule
A bird pushed too hastily from the tree.

In the sparse air, sound has grown weary
From giving me messages through the wind.
I am red and I am floating in the blue sky
Like a scarlet cloud shunned by the storm
Left to float alone, devoid of rain and dew.

From my view, I can see and understand it all
There are the farms with the rigid men
And the factories where lives are drained
There, skyscrapers to file the greedy away,
While the herds are locked in false churches below.

None of this matters more than the sky now.
The sky that is eating me slowly, I am untethered.
This blue monster that pleases the ground
Is feeding on me, a free-floating red balloon
Now going higher and beyond my plans.

The particles in me, like the particles in you
Long to be free and to be themselves again,
And are always seeking a moment to flee.
I know that moment now, and how high it is.
As my few particles rain back to the ground.

Singing Flames in the Morning Rain

Through the steady summer morning rain
There is a bird outside my window
Who continues to defiantly sing.
Or perhaps I should say I think it's defiant
Because I've always imagined that the rain
Puts out the birds like it does the flames.
But this bird is seemingly singing more now
Than it would if the sun weren't bobbing
And almost drowning above this wet scene.

I wonder if birds can show human spirit.
I wonder that because I sometimes do things
That are like when birds sing in the rain.
Things born of the effortless alchemy,
Of mixing hope and need and stubbornness.
I don't know that it's ever made the rain leave
Or if it helped me to keep my feathers clean,
Or saved my nest from swelling from the rain
But it has kept my mind on the worms it will bring.

And I even now hear another humanlike bird
Further off in another tree showing our spirit.
But though her voice is smaller and wetter
And now the rain is coming down harder
With even some rumbles of morning thunder
These little stubborn flames continue to sing.
Now some more are joining the choir.
Maybe it isn't only humanlike or birdlike to sing,
Even in the rain, but instead is just life's way.