

Poem as Map

For Connie Brown

Some want to make a maze in a cornfield
that you mosey through, past dead ends
and detours, to the finish line.

Others carve a circle round an apple,
so you return where you started,
but having peeled the rich rind off.

I see it as a map you've been given—
with thematic key and compass bearings,
bold and shaded colors—arrows pointing
to a destination, with background music.
I want you to feel the topography
of my thinking, its scale and gradients.

Just follow directions and don't get lost.
One day, I hope to meet you there.

Let Me Tell You What I Think

We'll never live up to our potential.
It always comes down to greed.
And jealousy. Even lazy yoga.
What life let's you get away with.

Our actions peddle pet philosophies
around the pedestals of statued principles.
Your *modus operandi*
becomes your *raison d'être*.

We'll never be more than apprentices
in Nature's beauty salons or fabrication shops.
Oglers. Idlers. Hourly help.
You'll be lucky to get a foot in the door

or out of your mouth. We'll never learn.

Now, your turn.

Continental Divide

When we divvied up our lifetime
together, you got the furniture;
I took some rare books and vintage maps.
You kept your family's Indonesian trunk;
I, my mother's antique mantel clock.
All in all, we split it down the middle,
after discarding all the junk
we had collected to outfit the years.
There were plenty of good memories,
handfuls, in fact, to cushion the boxes.

Yesterday, in my car, the old burro,
I crossed the Continental Divide,
where, as you know, water is pulled
either east or west. Even tears.

To the End

It's good to get to the end of things—
the spit of land that brings
you to the shore.
The rounded cul-de-sac
that turns you back.

To close the book on the last page,
and reach that age
when everything has gone before,
when everything reflects the past.
In your days' rollcall, to be the last

to be named. To have the last word.
No need to wonder if there's more
when you've seen and heard
it all.



Elwha

Olympic National Park, Washington

It begins where I can't see
and ends where I don't know:
I witness its esprit
de corps between beach sand and mountain snow.

I watch the water flee
over rocks in the riverbed,
dragging logs and debris,
flushed from its system like bones of the dead,

and then, once it's free
to revive both in rage and repose
its former identity
and purpose for the rest of time, it shows

how to bring, in magnificent motion,
the blue of the sky to the ocean.

The river was the subject of the greatest dam-removal project in U.S. history.