

Asheville Nightfall

Billy Baker's bow flies fast as a shuttle
weaving bluegrass on warp and weft
of a fiddle tonight; keeping time
with a dobro, McCoury mandolin,
and old banjo picker. A thimble-thumbed kid
thrums, strums his washboard. His girl
clacks spoons against her fair bare knee.
Time is slow, clogs quick
on the fabric of chestnut floor boards.
Cold beer, tin lanterns, laughter...
a dark haired girl cradles a bass
in the crook of her arm, loosely-
the way lovers hold each other
dancing at night in the country.
Sunset spun hues of tupelo honey,
muscadine wine, from a spindle of moon
on the mountains. Now stars glow white
as veins of quartz; fine as a lace
of dulcimer notes.

Blue Ridge Summer, 2013

Lightening dances on a ridgeline dusty with dusk.

Lip of a June moon looms; muslin yellow lady slipper
blooms on the azalea bald.

Mount Mitchell leans a purple shoulder

into thunderheads,

sky cracks like a geode.

Summer simmers in a green fragrance

of rain, tupelo blossom.

Tennessee Christmas, 2012

Tennessee dusk, Christmas.
Wet, crumbling slopes cling
to garlands of running cedar,
princess pine, reindeer moss,
gnarled roots of laurel
and rhododendron.

Hymn of a barred owl-
flute of cold rain
on a creek feathered in ice.

Hemlock boughs laced with moss
the color of oxidized copper.
Frost sweetens gold parchment
of lingering persimmons.

Wiry briar
of muscadine vine, multiflora rose
crackles with cardinal wings.

One low star glitters
through jack-pine needles.

A six point buck stamps
at muddy rows of winter squash
now plowed under.

Quartz Morning

Our morning run begins in a neighborhood
of angular new construction, split-
level ranch homes adorned with vinyl siding,
porch swings, boxwood hedges,
camellias, holiday yard ornaments.

Diverging from asphalt we follow
storm sewer drainage conduits;
cleared arteries of red ocher Carolina clay.

Wild chives grow where suburbia erodes.
Robins feast on a glade rich with holly berries.
We cross a creek bottom glistening
with crushed stars- mica.

Hickory hulls bounce in a thin current;
ladles scooping rainwater runoff into swales
of sea urchins- sweet-gum seed pods.

Steep creek-side slopes, trunks of tulip poplars,
conceal log cabin foundations
succumbing to erosion, roots, frost heaves.

I dislodge a chunk of quartz
from one crumbling foundation,
and wash it clean in the creek.

Back on asphalt, jogging home
I hurl the rock
against a sewer cap just to see
quartz crack open –
two halves of sunlit clarity;
flakes of rainbow, planes of diffraction.

That's how the day begins-
split to an iridescent heart.

White Egret

Egret,

still as a marble archer

in the marsh.

Bowed neck-

handle of a porcelain pitcher

pouring fresh cream.

Sunlit beak, drawn arrow

precise above tidal pull.

Shallow splash, silver flash,

sardine swallowed whole.