

LEARNING TO DANCE

We practiced with one another
like midweek scrimmagers
before the games on weekends
one step left, two steps right
keeping stiff time with the music
venturing in nervous groups
to town-approved venues
where the girls had flowers in their hair
and we had popular tonics in ours.
Octogeneric now, I wonder where they are
the girls who always had lines
waiting to cut in for a few steps
one to the left two to the right
the tall girl who always laughed and whispered
“dancing is the vertical expression of a horizontal desire”
sending a bolt of lightning down my leg
before disappearing into the next tap on my shoulder.
Where are they now, the lovely girls?
The tall girl’s brother, and others, are gone.
Is she dancing. sending lightning down legs?
One step left, two steps right
was, one step at a time, going somewhere.

CICADAS ARE BACK

They are back, climbing out of the soil in the garden
singing as they shake the dirt from their wings
each finding its place in the choral group.
Everything is old for these visitors, yet new.

This hatch finds you gone, gone underground
your footprints gone from the garden, weeds
where you tended tender plants, the cicadas
having a harder time without the loosened soil.

When their parents hatched seventeen years ago
you were sending Bach through the screen door
above the garden, you seated at the piano by the door
your song giving new notes and tempo to thei

Their song is different this time, more disciplined,
having more voices, new lines, points and counterpoints.
Is one of them a maestro, bent over in the garden,
touching the soil, tenderly encouraging this new song?

THE RAPE OF THE BOSON

Leave me alone, let me be, let me fly
unobserved unweighed unmeasured.
Billions of years I've traveled unbound
transmigrating from myself to myself
passing through, avoiding encumbrances
yes passing through you passing through goats
passing through protons passing through wine
and now immediately after my last rebirth
I might be done in by your vanity,
struck in flight by an oncoming nonentity
given stardom by your attempt to know me.

On the other hand, the assault put me on the map,
got me known, a household name now
owing my current status to those who saw me
only as an object to stalk, to discover,
to boast about having uncovered.

ANNIVERSARY

Spring came with a vengeance today
a year and a day after you left
the mercury in the thermometer
racing to see how high it could reach

before the frogs broke the surface
and started their wild *brraaking*
the voice of the turtle riding the breath
of the wind through still leafless trees
while yellow and purple crocuses
bruised themselves pushing relentlessly
through last year's garden brush.

Last week -- with rain heavy clouds
patches of snow on the pond bank
a blanket of slush covering the water --
was easier. Your absence was echoed
by the somber backdrop.
Now, with all these awakenings
the loud alarm that calls for you
sounds and sounds, echoing only itself.

WHAT A CHILD MIGHT THINK

The soldierly river flows northward
wearing a white collar on each bank.
Early cold and snow, followed by rain
has swollen the waters and led to calving
of the icy banks up the river, sending shards
of ice down singly and in small groups.
A child might think these floaters have souls
like the ducks they see in the local ponds
so resolute, so purposeful they appear to be.
In some of the groups, the range of sizes
might lead a child to believe they are families –
mothers and fathers and offspring.
A child might think that this parade
might go on forever, accompanied
by the smell of hot chocolate
inside the room from which he watches
in the same way that I might think
that Sue might lie in our bed forever
never having to be heaved into a chair
or hoisted hydraulically onto a bedside commode
or slid onto the stairlift to come downstairs
to sit so uncomfortably at the table
but allowed to lie peacefully in that bed
simply breathing an endless chain of breaths
each breath followed by another and another
and another and another, never stopping.

