

***ROAST BEEF WHATEVER THE SPECIAL IS***

I drag boots, short  
of breath on  
Dublin – Grandview  
because I don't want to  
cross the street,  
to share sandwiches  
from across the street.

And I don't want to cross,  
and you ask if I'm alright  
and I have to walk  
and take your cell phone  
for the free Chex mix coupon,  
and ask the cashier  
if you get a free drink today  
and get you a sandwich.

And I cross the street  
and stand ahead of a man  
who can't believe I work  
at a car store too.

And I tell him

I don't.  
I just help you get by.

And he says he works at one too  
and I can see that – the shirt –  
and he smiles and wiggles  
his full arm, full of sandwich,  
and I hate when people bump my arm  
like they're so clever I should just

tip over

and my chest is a crumpled  
wax sandwich wrapper  
and he wants me to  
bump him already  
and I look at the  
too dragged deli boy  
who gives me free tenders  
and I realize I've cried twice today  
but I will get through this

And Drop the Fearful Feeling 2

if I just call you  
at work  
across the street  
and ask again

if I've got the right sandwich.

***ABSORPTION OF A LETTER***

*(After Robert Duncan's "A Letter")*

I

As I went on to dream it:  
they took a bite            from my swollen palm,  
ripped it open            and the black inside  
fell into the other,  
where I could see it clearly  
for the first time.

What I had felt inside turned now  
into a synthetic poly pillow,  
a soft magnet, a soft conductor  
only I            must have spied;  
and            felt my heaviness again  
with the sight.

I now had    a fear            of being seen and given  
a meaning it            and I    should not have,  
a meaning I had yet to unwind  
from pure experience.

I dropped it as they bit the other palm,  
opened it up with no pain.  
And again    the cushion fell  
where only I would see it.

II

This material is my call and creation;  
this static that hangs over    and follows,  
bright when it is dark and raining.

I cannot run from it;  
I hold the kite string, even now  
with open palms.

I continue to rock foundations when I sit  
and skew level boards when I lean  
and there is this            dizziness that lingers  
when we're all in the path of transmission.

III

I met                my carrier of sleep  
when I was young, looking at me  
from the tops of trees  
and holding me,                and learning  
how to be invasive black and polished glass  
and when                to come out from me again.

He spoke to me                without words or play  
and told me when to close my eyes,  
with a weight that lingered.  
And he put the black in my palms  
and woke me up to the wrenching  
of two worlds                sharing a bodytool  
that aches so silent                with everything                inside at once.

**METERING FEAR**

I am afraid  
my purpose  
for being tied to you  
is fraying;  
that you will not see it  
before the rope breaks.

I close my eyes  
and beg you  
to take hold of me,  
and hear no response.

*A FEELING, UNNAMED*

There is a certain  
thoughtless                   cerebration  
  that hurts my nerves.  
I feel   in my body  
                                  like I'm            looking  
out a window   that isn't there

And   I            must       do this to myself.  
But    it still hurts   and it hurts  
          in my fingertips       and it hurts  
up   to my elbow                   and       and  
                                  and I am crying without tears  
and so sore   and swollen inside.



and see a girl  
who stopped me  
that morning to say hello

Voices around  
say their condolences  
when you look the wrong way  
but I am looking at her

And I am wondering

IV

From the mirrored slice  
I too know intimately

You keep one eye on

V

I was once at the mercy  
of being unable to sleep  
until I wished him well

Only able  
to be undone  
by the same request  
in a new voice

That mercy was  
reluctant to appear  
for the moment at most

VI

*“Sharing the bed  
is not allowed  
unless you want to be crushed,”  
mother says*

The time is too considerable  
between us

So much that it becomes a threat



VII

I dream about you  
so often,       echo   ditto  
          because  
          I cannot let the world stop  
          when I am asleep

                          And I much prefer  
you in control  
          over her

Unremitting other

I love           the arrival inside

VIII

When I was a child  
these sufferings were for gun-faced  
                          boys only

          Aiming the cork  
          so seriously  
I land on the front page in color

IX

Some languish in a lack of language

In what I lay in at night  
          when I'm swimming in the black

*"Similarity is supposed to be a compliment,"*  
          you say

          And with some regret  
          for my ability       to juxtapose  
          anything  
I look in the mirror when I'm alone  
          and almost see you

X

For half a breath you break

And I see it every time

I go under the water

XI

To get lifted and lip-drubbed  
by a stranger  
they cheer on this time

I tell him to step with me

And tell me why men outside  
why

And skittish thrill is the reason  
he gets away with this  
action that leaves me unwell

XII

I am adjacent to the halo  
for reasons I can mostly control

I am waiting for someone  
to explain why exhaustion comes  
when I am close to finding a direction  
to go in to ask for  
to fixate on until it turns average

XIII

I scrutinize until deciding  
your crown is a different shape today

And I am once again steered back to you

As you apologize for being in a bad dream

And feel sorry for making me walk

And I wonder  
if I protest enough  
you might carry me  
like all the pretty girls do