

To Make Much of Time

I spent four weeks gutting
the fire-wrecked remains
of Leinkauf Elementary School
in Old Mobile;
day-laboring under the auspices
of a cost-plus job;
shoveling, sweating, and grumbling in the vernacular
of the drop-out grunts
who slung that shit beside me.

I am forty-four now and left
with a coal-tar creosote burned scar
in the crook of my left arm.
Rinsed in gasoline,
I washed that job from my resume.

Some days I do get fond
thinking of me and those boys
cussing up over tall boys in the parking lot,
camaraderie unburdened by the future.

I lasted four months
with a lily-petal pale
English lass,
drinking and sinking into each other
among the bosom
of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.
I lost track of time
listening her mother-tongued
cockney lingo;
confident from the first
I would never talk to her again someday.

I am left with a faded Polaroid
of my lass straddled atop me,
swinging her head up out-of-focus,
hair swirling
like oil shot into water.

Her smile still catches my mind
just the right way some times
wordless lips, suggesting the night.

To Make Much of Time and other poems

I have blindly labored at tearing down
things of stone and wood, day by day.

I have lazed among lost mountains,
listening to English-accented seconds tick away.

I interrogate these indifferent moments, suspicious of their worth.
Yet memory answers for them.

Lost

Somewhere near Carbon Hill,
the Village of Love and Luck,
of coal and coke,
my ancestors rest.

They were Walker County coal people
when fields ran limit to limit unbroken
under the bench lands and snug farms.

My Father proposed each year
to guide me to their graves
planted wild among long-leaved pines.

We have never gone.
I now live far from the red clay,
west all the way to the sea.

He cannot walk far these days.
When we speak we no longer plan
a future trip to find our forefathers.

We each pause at our helplessness.
These long spaces wait for us
like the next diagnosis.

He is beginning to prepare.
He passes on my ancestors' coordinates,
exact and hopeless.

So much, passing on.
And I with no son.

Found Money

Twenty dollar bill in pants
I had not put on in years:
Found money.

I lost twenty pounds
to see what she might still find
after an old photograph's
worth of time has passed.

We will rendezvous under
the cover of different stories
in the slow summer heat
of a 'Bama back road detour.

See if
that money still spends.

Out-of-Office Reply

Captain Bicklebaum,
U.S. Strategic Helium Reserve,
creates and launches
a dihydrogen monoxide
uncalibrated anti-personnel projectile.
Joplo Micanor, Director,
U.S. Bored of Geographic Names,
absorbs a direct hit.
Her breath
explodes with gonnagetchas.

She and I escape
white paper due dates
into a heave-ho
water balloon afternoon.
We draw on our experience
as ten-year olds:
Lightsabers and limitless days.
Lighthearted,
free to rise as far as