

## Ars Poetica

I found the small boy  
at the center of me  
lost for so long

wide-eyed with wonder  
at the feel of the earth  
and grass between toes,

at the size of the sky  
and the lullaby wind,  
at the shine on the water

reflecting it all. He watches  
and listens  
at the fringe of attention.

No one sees the small boy  
till he wants to be seen.  
He's as quiet as sunlight

in the cool morning air.  
He melts into shadow  
at the first hint of fear,

avoiding the giants  
all filled with hard laughter.  
In the fun-house of years,

his trail of old bread crumbs  
was lost and grown cold.  
But I found the small boy

not a waif or an orphan,  
he's the quiet small voice  
at the center of me.

## Appalachian Weather

On days like this  
when rainclouds park overhead  
and don't budge

when the rain drizzles  
and fizzes and gusts bony cold,  
rattling windows,

chilling the toes, I remember  
the mountain  
my brother and I once climbed.

Warm sun halfway up,  
until mist  
like cold rags slapped our brows.

Then came the rain. Hiking  
up through the layers of weather  
to the top wrapped in cloud

a swirl of wraiths  
among rocks  
we haunted that place

where sky and earth meet.  
When it rains this cold rain I believe  
we are haunting it still.

## The Shape We Made

I remember not romance, but passion,  
a carnivorous yearning for pleasure,

a ravenous, burning phosphorus  
like napalm that clings to the skin.

How bright we were inside that light  
and in that burning, not consumed.

We were smeary and blurred, partly blind,  
an enigma tossed up by the sea.

The shape we made was borderless,  
an unmapped, primal continent,

an ocean we both pioneered.  
What happened next? The usual. We soon

became a driftwood raft whose knots  
and lashing came undone. We drifted off

on spars and planks, both lost.  
The end was blunt: your brick of truth

against my straw. "It's best  
for both of us," you said, without remorse.

And that was that. Wordless with loss,  
I felt the floor unhinge and tilt

as I absorbed your absence there,  
a dried up ocean bed, an empty space.

Did I call "Wait!?" Was that made you pause  
just as the door between us whickered shut?

Did you look back with second thoughts  
before I heard your footfalls fade away?

## Against Allegory

There is a wild place behind my house  
where hunters loiter in the trees with bows  
and harder calibers. They hunt in fall,

but not in spring, when all is burgeoning.  
In spring, the wood's green blood is waking up  
and pulses with its uninflected life.

It ramifies with verdant industry:  
the wild rose explodes in sunny glades;  
a hummingbird of phosphorescent blue

hovers on blooms then flits away; a buck  
displays his downy rack, all innocence;  
the haughty cardinal is loudly red.

This wood is not the wood of Dante's tale,  
although, like him, I'm more than half way through  
my life. He forged, from hell to heaven's gate,

a link of gold. Each word refers to its  
own family tree, his song to those before.  
My trees are not his allegoric ones:

this is the thorny, bud-filled, living world,  
where danger lurks and beauty hides in sight,  
where oaks intone their songs of wind and light.

## **When No One is Listening**

There are things the hearts says  
when no one is listening  
it whispers in sunlight  
of the future's bright morning

You follow the fence line  
and the ribbons of sun beams  
down through a meadow  
to the edge of a wood

the wood you will enter  
when you're ready or not  
the place you will wake from  
when the heart has its day