

## THE RHYME OF THE WESTERN Tanager

Seagulls are here to talk about death  
though death has no continuity  
as the glacier of the sky extends  
deep north  
onto Lake Superior  
then east to the St. Lawrence  
and skims across the first dead ocean.  
Wrong names. The gulls  
are forcing us to talk  
about death while the rain  
flaps its hands  
for us all. What is the first question.

Who gave Hector his earring  
in the lost tapestry of Troy  
that is really Constantinople.  
Who misgrieved  
one thousand years of Christians  
on the Bosphorus strait.  
The rain flaps its hands.

The first question is what  
would you say on the last day of school  
if you knew there were nothing else you could learn.  
The cars keep sliding  
over the ultimatum  
abrading it and mudding it  
but the line is of course much deeper.

We know birth doesn't make color. Nor is it local.  
That patch of yellow

right above the mid-tailed ass  
and the sparkling fake  
tropic song  
have nothing to do with Wisconsin.  
A beautiful chain of rings  
spills from my embroidered collar.  
Garrotte, gallows, guillotine.  
The songbirds resettle  
without continuity.  
The pair of gulls, dawn and night:

I must narrate this perfect person  
to whom there is nothing I can give.  
Their beautiful jokes about coffins  
and claims about honey  
the tamer of horses  
I must sew into the wall.

Here while the cars stop coming  
the concept of audience is a dodge.  
Words are dizzy, full not null.  
They decorate with silk the empty lodge.

## I HOPE TO BE AN UNSETTLER

No land has ever claimed me,  
no person, no people, no place.  
I am always standing between burials  
and the nearest tree  
holds all I can know.  
At the spring words bubble up  
and trickle down in banderoles.  
At first I had to read them  
till the grass smelled sweet  
and the bugs bit home.  
Getting old means reading them  
while the hill of my choices  
grows. At the end of the field  
a deer measures the meadow.  
She is so small today.  
What words can you possibly wear.  
What can I bring you, I  
so without kin  
I have no hands,  
no apparatus,  
thus offer my persona  
as medium,  
a wager: assuming  
there's something past myself  
or perhaps a way the particular dead  
with whom I've walked  
have shaped me in some unlit land.  
What land. I cannot even say it lies  
beneath the creek  
because the creek can never be mine.  
No creek can ever be mine.

I take what I should carry.  
There is a clicking sound when I stay still  
like a gas stove failing.  
I defined by misfire.  
I defined by naked love,  
love without relation, I  
have piled miswords  
on your desire. Now  
I'm asking for forgiveness. Not  
the ordinary kind,  
puckered with regret.  
I am asking for a kind  
of eternal endurance,  
like a child who jumps across a chasm  
and does not want to jump back.  
Keep me clicking, please.  
Skimming while the bubbles break my feet.  
In the field the deer finds grass  
at just her height.  
But not because she wants to disappear.  
Something's breathing to make those holes  
while the woodpecker strikes a pose.  
I have to believe the right world follows.  
I shout each time it comes  
like the sun shouts a highway  
over open water,  
hoarse and bright and wrong.

## I HAVE A SECRET

I have given my life to history,  
and I do not care about history. I care about

the deceitful stillness of water  
cut off from its home, and the fragility

of skin, all skin,  
as the brave interface. I want

to skin the knee of water. I want  
to tell you something so true

you sing like legs, carrying  
our hopelessly binary meaning

in a third direction.  
This is the way night looks

from the top of the Tower of Babel.  
On top of the Tower of Babel we've murdered

all possible kinds of building,  
all possible kinds of labor,

and every architectural style. We sit there  
waiting for night that cannot reach us

or at least mostly doesn't  
anymore. It is the most beautiful meaning

I've ever seen or heard

watching you walk your song

back to me on this once  
-impossible patio built

on the death of work and suffering  
but somehow not of difference.

We kept the curse. We have herb gardens.  
I am making you a salad now

of fruit and sinless venison.  
Water condenses when it wills

saltlessly out of the eyes  
of anyone who agrees.

Time doesn't need sight or detection.  
Without them I keep its other name.

## LET'S MEAN THE UNIVERSE

what do the stars write all day while the sun  
keeps us from reciprocating  
I imagine

let's imagine  
they're sirens  
of an emergency that's time

and though they have taken the solemn  
aspect of mute  
facts interrupted  
at best by dust

it is possible to shift into a faith  
that they are blaring  
that there is something to be said

intermittently as best  
to fuck with mandatory forward  
and be ourselves  
and by us let's mean the universe

## IF SO, WINTER

one night vortex cold  
a tree under streetlight  
turned to brass tips  
like stars  
pointed out on an astrolabe

o Aristotle  
or my love  
the pain is a crown

can't you feel  
every resemblance on earth as intended  
and therefore vagabond?



## RETRIEVAL

some say they remember clear as day  
but let us pray but when day comes  
it's blinding each time  
then not, an acclimation  
standing in for other acclimations

silence between planes  
a long blue descent  
snow gusting up  
then not

one day instant messenger died

does it mean  
one has grown up  
when paradox feels tiresome

think of the sky above the snow

I wanted to contain the outer shape  
by hugging it  
this was the use of theology  
one could hold the incommensurate  
by means of love / advanced respect

To the one being quiet  
I have asked you to speak  
With the life I have hoarded  
Kill me if you have to  
But don't fuck it up

## SCOPOLALIA

From the crispy edges of an old cut flower  
to the soft inside

or splitting a bud to flick the pointless  
engines of its future, protostigma  
skin on ovules

taking on the hypodream  
that simulation doesn't matter  
unless we fetishize originals, I want  
to live somewhere we don't  
fetishize originals

by violence if I must

The probability a string  
will swing toward one  
accident or any other  
or configure many  
or require another parse  
informs the architecture of retrieval

on a planet where very loud thunder  
recalls another planet