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 Bosporus 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
abrating 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, gallow, 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