

my arms in the water instead and saved
the thrush, hurled it back at the stunned sky,
and the wing-scud marked that bitter rain's
second fall. We were bathed in it.

Did you hear

at dusk the thrush's eloquence unchanged?
Now there is only the wind in the dead,
unshed leaves of the beech tree—a bronze rasp,
and beyond sound, corn-stubble fast in hoar-frost,
the rows' frozen yawning—the field's rigor.
Let this be what waits for you: your soul cast
into that mottled breast, you inspire rain;
rain fills your hollow bones, and you descend
a slow, stale wind—a stone on your foot, until
the rain exhales you, revises itself—
a dead, heavy well—and above you
my same face, grown still, on the water.

Pinion

THE TRACTOR TURNS ON PREACHER

I was dragging up the trunk of a wet
red-oak, when it hung a stump, and I lost
purchase; the tractor reared and fell
back on me. I was held fast there, pinioned, not
dying, growing numb and light, wait-crazed
and finally calm. The creek bank saved me;
its wet reasoned it would take me back, gave
every time I took a breath. I breathed
down: my chest did not rise; my spine fell
into that wet depression, and a beech
tree wheezed, and the creek strangled itself
on the rocks, and time was severed to bleed
beside me and then clot. I was impressed:

stone, bone, gristle, muscle, cartilage, and clay.
I smelled it; the woods were ripe with fresh death,
and the drone of the locusts rose, reclaimed
my voice, disclaiming me. A lone crow
landed on the tractor tire, and it turned
with him, disevolving. He looked at me and spoke,
“Be quick now about it. Before the others
hear.” And as he spun slowly the mud
fell from that wheel, meat from its bone,
and the crow growled, his mouth shut.
I saw the paling stalks, then; with my eye, open
in that feathered belly, I saw the dead
silk, the sweet milk seep from the abundance
I had thought mine. I watched the wind thresh
the fluming leaves of tobacco, the bright glut
of morning glories. The bottomland bore
old freshet scars, and in the woods fat stumps—
fiery carcasses—oozed my same story.
And then I was over a strange country
I knew nothing of. In the meantime:
a spider had come; from her distended
belly the umbilical self raveled, a fine
viscid line enjambed, her web definite
in the steering wheel; the shrouds had collected,
the sleeping plenty wound in her cursive;
by a clean incision, a locust had left
itself, hollow but clinging to my shirt;
a kingfisher had flown down with the dusk
to eat where the water had worried
a ragged, blank margin. Soon they would come
find me and interrupt it, but not before
I saw the way things are, not before I saw
cast from the belly of that halcyon
its confession of ribs, a conversion fall
clean and white, indefinite, on placid sand.