

Sometimes I wake up in the middle of a vacant thought or daytime trance, brought on by the rain, or the peculiar way the leaves have suddenly moved on a nearby tree, or not moved, and have only seemed original, and severed from the dripping walls, the billboards advertising real estate agents, waterfront seafood restaurants, and bleach. And I sense a kind of presence, not unlike the hum of electrical wires, or the faded reflection of clouds passing over a window, the way they are shown to themselves without eyes, without mouths to kiss, or hands to hold to the wind. And I have been told that this is called *leisure*, or *pleasure*, or something related to the vague abstraction of youth, something I'll slowly grow out of, winter by winter, silence by song, whatever repeats and remembers itself in my name. Until one day, standing on a street corner in early July (maybe the exact same street corner), looking at maple leaves catching the rain, I will see only pity and lichen shades, barely-there shadows that fall to the street, and the light will be too far away to remember, and the words will be *drizzle*, and *maple*, and *green*. And before I know it, the language will not let me leave it. The traffic will pass as it always has passed: dependably, rumbling west of the bridge. And my heart will be sewn to this rhythm, and wise. But in the wild reeds and coiled groves that line the ballfields west of Dundas, the scattered trash and dead-end parks where redwing blackbirds chitter in the sun, and kids hole up in plywood forts and crush a little bead against their rings—a mortar in the grinder box, a wonder at the absent sense of time—the world is still imbued with light, and a feeling that each leaf, each particular grain

of sand, each invisible current of wheat, is lost on the structure  
of words. And that here on earth the truth goes on sleeping,  
and the orbiting stars go on claiming their horror without us.  
Where do we go from here then, stranger? Skirting the off-trail fingers  
of scree, riding the Highline through eastern Montana nights,  
squatting the rooftops of empty construction sites, courtyards  
of funeral homes, sacristy basements, boxcars with shadow-scenes playing  
on the walls. Wheels and vagrancies. Turnstiles of ecstasy.  
Burdens of lights in the tumbling cars. Fashion my brain  
to those rattle-bag versions, those strange combinations of fever  
and pitch. I'll trade you the rest of my life to believe it.  
The wheat in the thresher. The deer in the ditch.