Volumes

Matthew Brooks Stark

University of South Carolina - Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation


This Open Access Thesis is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.
VOLUMES

by

Matthew Stark

Bachelor of Fine Arts
University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011

Bachelor of Business Administration
University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in

Creative Writing

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2014

Accepted by:

Samuel Amadon, Director of Thesis

Fred Dings, Reader

Ed Madden, Reader

Stephen Sheehi, Reader

Lacy Ford, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
ABSTRACT

*Volumes* is a book-length work of poetry in three parts. *Volumes* investigates the process of art, wherein the creative act constructs both the created object and its creator—the artist. I use the term “creation” rather loosely: I propose such an act to be present within one’s self-recognition, imaginative contextualization of oneself within a setting, or performance of a role. *Volumes*, through Ars Poeticas, struggles with ideas of self-awareness, wherein the artist achieves a unique determinacy before and after a creative act because the artist is necessarily changed by the act of creation. The project struggles against the opaqueness of inspiration—since the act of creation re-creates the artist in some way, the process of creating art is incomprehensible or at least obscured. The poems from *Volumes* feature characters that represent general classes of people: man, boy, she, guard, and playwright, to name a few. Each creates in his or her unique medium, from pen-and-ink drawings to cooking and from naming to imagining, while self-consciously aware of the act of creation and its effects on their ever-changing being. In a process each artist does not understand, the creation provides new understanding; from new understanding, the self is recognized anew. The project considers also whether the single medium of poetry can represent these creative acts in other distinct mediums.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iii

Chapter 1 ............................................................................................................................... 1

Time passing under an arm ................................................................................................. 1

A curve unnamed my own / before a sea alive ................................................................. 4

Housing Complex .............................................................................................................. 5

In this in which the wild deer / startle and stare out ....................................................... 6

The whistle dim the front light dim .................................................................................. 7

Play the image of a tree / in leafy architecture ................................................................. 13

Body my crutches / semblance my seat ........................................................................... 14

Housing Complex .............................................................................................................. 15

Like a little bell he trembles ............................................................................................. 16

Like a little bell he trembles ............................................................................................. 17

Manipulate Inanimate ....................................................................................................... 18

Housing Complex .............................................................................................................. 20

To forget to reduce to pebbles to turn ............................................................................. 21

Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................................ 22

Still Life ............................................................................................................................... 22

Chapter 3 ............................................................................................................................ 41

On the plate and his lips ................................................................................................... 41

The few small ties / flutter from a lightest body ............................................................... 42
The grain a sea of switches .................................................................43
Salvo ..................................................................................................44
He could sit in the culvert and see......................................................45
The few small ties / flutter from a lightest body ....................................46
He sets the globe / adrift in the grass ..................................................47
Dear Sister .......................................................................................48
Big culvert open / so walk in...............................................................49
Dear Sister .......................................................................................50
The line for photographs / stalling ....................................................51
You, There ......................................................................................52
Like a little bell he trembles ...............................................................55
CHAPTER 1

TIME PASSING UNDER AN ARM

Light in percussion stares west over the ocean
the playwright rubbed his eyes with his fists,
shared a cabin there and ate. Says to the players

lights waving in small forkfuls over the fence
to pile more earth on top, their faces full
and acting solemn, the white and black blush

of makeup where here and there a wall stood.
The candle flame yellowing a cracked wall
lanterns hanging to the mast and stage center

troubling to put on a coat. A stagehand shakes
a burlap sack of torn paper down into a light
the snow contextualized, then even cold.

In the clear air the planes and the featureless
luggage already below. Says to the players
to sleep in the passageway. Says to the players

how he drew it the river did not flood. The
street opens so standing stage center fate clings
to the player like a dress. No glare passing

over the bridge, passing snap of light sounds
out into the clear. No one to see that uncanny,
under the cobble the buildings shift in ruts

then reweight. The stagehand sets a shoulder
windowpanes rattle in frames behind a curtain,
rummages through eyeliner. Here bickering
over a drink. Constructs then presents a walk in town. Wrapped in her arms player reels left to center, stretched a hand then for the orange, brushed hair back and pulled. Residue and heat and the bulk of that coat found into the river. Hooked by the spacing of her dance, holds the glass and biting. Strings shuddering down. Tells eavesdrop over a fire, heard on the cobble. In a window a long counter and shelves. Weighs money in copper scales, cleft high in the ridge where the road draws to a vanishing point, draws that fallen down beneath a flap of sod.

Pocket of the plain in sight, movement splashes like how he wrote it once. An audience its own iteration endlessly clapping, lofty feint of encore.

Play audience quiet with surprise now marveling quite out of seats. Drinks wine then with an air of mastery. Glows in its higher levels. Suitcase secured with stout cord so scissors hanging from the belt. Down to a glen and fish looking through the glass. Mattresses filled with beech.

Notice a grinding trailing from its compartments heard then like clockwork. On stage player out under the moon, lines drumming seat backs with programs and with the stage and with the lights. Snow clinging to the mantle. Where the curtain falls and strange. Player unashamed of loose fat, smoking pipe in hand. Clears away the picture paper, head light with this particular applause the final outburst. A bear carries off a sheep. Plowed yesterday for soybeans. The players now each stepping in costumes, choosing a foothold with care. Rejoices to hear the sound. Sent to the tavern light ebbing in leaves of fine gold. The particular moment to open a safe. The crib in the kitchen carefully
waved a gull away. Player reclines in the stern, mixes a palette to color rolling waves, sparklers begin then like rain. Dogs tied to apple trees.

Wristwatch tearing out brambles. Playwright rubs his eyes, pairs the set with music, sent the stage whistling. And with the lights. All the misery of the city in willows overhanging the dike. Fascinated for over an hour. Meant to go on up the hill. In the arms of hardwood floors, practices one clean turn under those lights. Says to the player pull up alongside, hot engine idling, but with the blare of brass.
A CURVE UNNAMED MY OWN / BEFORE A SEA ALIVE

You were there all of us together
watched seagulls dive over blank grey oceans

when the largest crowd to date gathered
the air became dry so quickly

dry like chalk or talc or
the air felt like powder in my mouth

so I gestured instead I waved at you
my hands shone down bright messages

like a bird I rose into the air my hands
now frantic fluttering showing you to pull

my oration down the crowd blank and grey
HOUSING COMPLEX

The man assembles a small wooden version
of his home a model so to speak he places
a shining quarter to mark his position
within the home and as he carries the model
as he moves from one room to the next
he slides the quarter through the model
the quarter sounds raw as it slides over
unfinished wood the man feels raw
as he walks his legs mechanical like stilts
like crutches he begins to lumber he begins
to bounce the model on his knee as he walks
the quarter falls from a window the roof
breaks drops to the floor when the man
knocks the home against the wall to pieces
there is no answer when the man knocks
the home to the floor there is no answer
IN THIS IN WHICH THE WILD DEER / STARTLE, AND STARE OUT

The deer in this woods startling then start out
breathy stares the settling glassing over
from the trees a hesitant dripping snow
thatch droops then falls like folded paper wings

thinning mist fans out through the woods the trees
glimpse of ground here or there in this in which
lace layer of pine coarse and grey bedded
down with frost so step slowly please listen

hear one needle crack so to me the deer
hardly startle when already the head
is up to see the quick attentive ears
trembling in which cold set for a sound so

when soft sound enters the ear of the deer
ripples through its flanks cracks against the deer
one low bound the deer does not startle but
rests until it is time to go and goes
THE WHISTLE DIM THE FRONT LIGHT DIM

I.

The call returned the linnet calls for an encore here the rail the cut spike the crushed stone polish the wooden tie the countryside breeze and fragrant with seed here the rolling stock the fields and there across grasses a pine the scent drops from a tree empty into a crow fringe of trees fringe of brush the blowing petals old wasp nest of paper in wind wheat mingles like chimes the trees shifting and ringing meadow of light heavy still in the ink pot to illustrate those bells in a glass on the table pastel dusk and wood grain muddling the right angle here perhaps the water the colors of sky flitting strips of gauze and when I woke I woke with an image in my mouth
II.

To become resonant the pond hushed reflection
airbrushed clouds lapsing but always forward

water uneasily over the page uneasily drops
from a branch into the pond disturbed this sheet

the brown pond ripples in bright bands
its currents like bronze the wind its coarse tack

the clear ringing out from the center beginning
the dull forest lines carrying color tree lines

echo the moss facing north rolling forward
here the linnet rushes the shore receding

the shallow mud a clear stream with rounded
stones and there arresting time a grove
III.

On this table the water lily blooms in black ink
the taste of memory its currents the form the foam
the linnet occurs weld the name into a rusted
cage into the pond so to disrupt some trees
some white charlock breath must rise vertically
here blown apart in the air I came I saw
this the palette the smoke the light pours through
coarse branches backlit over grayscale grass
the projector flits on falters that barrel rolls
clicking on its side through mist the grid
of waves unwoven before the barrel revolves
to the image I wish to see projected depth
of water light down the movement the vagueness
of the waves the pressure deep charcoal coral
a lone net drifting in the trench the greenish
blue slack of waves and then the pond silent
IV.

The ink pot runs low to draw so bright a cage
that sky the thunderhead orients to new depth

inside the clear glass bowl on the table sways
over a field wheat still green blusters a shift

the scent spreading carries mayweed a shift
of light a rail tie in the mud heavier still for age

to imagine passenger service the sound tracking
like a filament bulb its golden circuit fixed

by the window a white daisy falls behind the metal
frame slack the world the brakes waking the cars

the blossom the bough shaking merrily down
so much buoyant signal in the bowl on the table

shape that before the notes the wind or the light
atmosphere bearing in loose nets and on and on
V.

On the pond a rowboat bars across a wave
strum the oarlock the harp the mist the ripples
through the air the waves echo and shaking
open the pond close the eye the horizon
the palette a dirty green look carefully rotate
the glass a bit the scene unfolds like music
so pressure builds upon the eye grains
and grasses and that shrill light be silent
to know the wave means to know the ear
and whether the pond is the one I wished to see
the ripples roll across the page there the traction
each slow word ringing through air the throat
pulling at grain the stalks bow over the stems
and a petal dropping like metal can you feel
the air its dry pressure the ear yearns for water
but some shuddering heat sustained
VI.

Past the stray pine so now pulls along two rails
silent the ink pot the schedule its propulsion
extends through a meadow the sleeping car
murmuring a hand taps the tray apt to rattle
to say I have arrived is different than stepping
coltish from a steaming train the whistle repetitive
here the pull the draw lining up by a spare tree
dew on the ground and the lamp signaling
word after word thinking and typing chickweed
the form of track the line always crooked the linnet
flutters against the station board eerily its color
red cuts through thistle that thorny garden
its purchase on parchment the ink drives on
rich dark soot like chocolate or glowing a basin
of coffee beans the scent shifts so now the car full
of smoke the lungs reject whole black grains of it
PLAY THE IMAGE OF A TREE / IN LEAFY ARCHITECTURE

So deep in the task of

    lines and squares
doing any good for himself

    littered with paper torn
from the walls petty triumph

    a fountain into its stone basin
rose suddenly and dashed ahead

    looked out at the window

sat there most of the afternoon

    last wheel down the lane
some other heap of poor grass

    knit full of fireflies
fragrant and covered with dust

    high and ominous over the sea
collapse time and space or not

    like a paper cup or not
BODY MY CRUTCHES / SEMBLANCE MY SEAT

She woke with a start like what
have we here I tell her
nothing me I suppose

some strange history like
when marbles roll through sand
they leave little troughs

like I could come after
and fill them with water
I could course water down

in rivulets find some shining
hieroglyph in the sand
while I stand here looking about

for some hook I tell her see
these contours it means—
I mean I am standing when the man

arms high above his head,
like this, says the man, this, see, this,
hear me before you attempt

what I attempt he says then dives
into the water clear and cool
like those descriptions of lakes

bright marbling ponds one finds
in the arctic I cannot believe when
he surfaces arm crusted

with jewels I cannot believe when
he says dew these are
drops really I do not understand

how anything could be so marvelous
and I think like this before
nosing forward preparing to dive
When I dream, I dream of losing my senses
in some dark wash across the desk
straining to open my eyes I cannot see
to hear, there is nothing, a fan or a train crowing
through the wall, the room dark and quiet
the room I find myself in, my room, standing
out of reach and prone in a bed, nothing to see
but the darkness or slow electric pulse
of a laptop nothing to hear but my own
rustling. *What do you think it means* a doctor
sounds into the inky splotch before me and I
cock my head at the question, straining to see
him he looks puzzled my eyes cannot see
the question seems like he shouldn’t ask
LIKE A LITTLE BELL HE TREMBLES

The man hustles into the room with ripe petunias his mouth partly open he is ready
to speak urgent his discourse ripening the man sets down his briefcase before taking a moment
the outline of his hand trembles against a wall behind him before pushing his glasses
up his nose his eyes look like charcoal if you catch him when his glasses
are not filled with light his eyes find you in the crowd his eyes are eloquent
when he speaks you want to listen you want to believe when he speaks he speaks
of things you want to hear when he speaks you believe that you and he are good
LIKE A LITTLE BELL HE TREMBLES

The banker clears a space with his hands like
he’s done this before worn this tie before

buttoned this shirt before he smiles and holds
the man’s gaze meanwhile so the documents stack

neat there unobtrusive off to the side
of the desk the documents smell like manila

or maybe vanilla worked into his cologne
the air hangs ripe ready sweet he passes

a pen with the man’s name already on it passes
a folder with his name at the top passes

a business card and there his name and the man’s
at the top of the future he presses into his hands
I.

A small firefly like an ordinary movement
in light or knit together common like
each glowing unravels in green grass

as it rolls or two red heels incessant
in their tapping bright eyes to the sky
its blue trappings wispy all lapsing

those vestiges of clouds she forms
like language, she says, the way the viewer
in agency hears the way I want to hear her

the rabbit bedded in sky its overgrown ears
the way it listens great loping ears sprawled
in the grass she tidies her skirt about her

legs no longer visible to imagine the legs
she buries in the grass so that when
she appends you looking blurt out a word
II.

Not like this, she says, her eyes cast down
bright eyes shrouded like some ruby floats
over green grass and into a thicket

some dark brush she opens her mouth
perhaps to yawn the wings of an insect
stop buzzing it falls like light plastic

to the ground the cloud in its shifting
is now between states the hot hum
from the brush quiet when time resumes

its pace is different it stalks a gait cannot
be light when time moves like this she
says listlessly says quiet night to hear her

is to hear the raw hum of summer
say grating say in the end the rabbit
beds down in the sky wisps out to blue
HOUSING COMPLEX

The man crosses to the far side of the street
tests his home for a crack in the gate the walls
hesitantly rotting his home wrought and closed
by magnificent iron he checks the knob quick
and quiet like a knife smoke crumbles
from the chimney and issues in rusty plumes

he inhales the man vomits to look upon his home
the fraying fitful mess of it the man stoops
in his lot and falters the man is not superstitious

but flips a coin each night whether to leave
a trembling in his lungs from fitful sleeping
so near the home his elegant legs in disrepair

he paws at the fading coin longs for the wind
to change his body into a husk for the rusty
soot pouring from the home to cascade away
TO FORGET TO REDUCE TO PEBBLES TO TURN

Was there a poem I’d like to write
I sit on the porch and it feels like a poem

sun beating down beating
the dog next door beating down

on the house the man next door
beating down beads of sweat

from his face. Give him a minute the man
sun beating down on his face

hot and tired give the man a minute
before asking the man to speak

speak speak man speak please tell us
something tell us about your life

about your birth your upbringing
tell us man tell us your options
CHAPTER 2

STILL LIFE

I.

In most a vision so painful
far away the steady explosive notes
paralyzed the minute blood vessels
checked the oil and never burned out

innocent and thinking all the time
engaged in a quiet and happy
trowel to make a brick stove
living there for a time and not paying

those ruins with youthful eyes
although clipped every day
the bells ringing are murmuring
close hooks down into earth

out of the house with a copper pail
when the ponds first were frozen
arrangements of flowers
wrote that one should not talk
II.

Through a glass of golden fish
capsuled whole the speeding parts
some shading and pepper
dark wall for electric switches

shades and echoes of still vibrant
beating in the trees and a persistent
face of a mantelpiece clock
withdraw that touch and move

struggling with contrary winds
over the top of gold spectacles
fallen pine could frighten
at work seemed to be dancing

replace the note in the envelope
short halt down a side street
enough white lights in arches
the spark resembles lightning
III.

Door open and the lamp burning
sight could reach in any direction
glass of rum poured out
street wet with melting snow

windows upon the setting
enough light left to shoot
path went down into the thick
dim stable lantern swinging

polished and rubbed over
tight twisting and the gnarls
oaks covered with the nests
stiffened into a crumpled ball

such was the conversation
cold stove and the dishes
for here they beat
open as the eyes of a body
IV.

Shimmer of the plain to the edge
roasted on little silver spits
elbow propped to paint pictures
the small hours by the lamp
court machine and watch maker
riotous noise over the liquor
window with the rain dripping
covers them by a napkin
mouths out the suffering
cords crossed each other at spots
silver bracelet round and round
head cocked to one side
replace the glass upon the shelf
rang out loudly like a bell
glowed with the hues of evening
upon the water gleaming white
V.

So the clock began to strike
comes begging to the door
the high hiss of a horsefly
and escapes to the woods

noon broods upon the deep
from a roof newly shingled
to be taken to the cemetery
little space between the task

cup stood on the side-table
bare and colorless and devoid
halls of these same limestone
along and pass the broom

oak and studded with nails
hand dropped over the side
stopped the mill when he saw flames
moonlight at the open door
VI.

Wood chair by the further wall
the simple ripple of a stream
legs giving way beneath
hand of time lay withered

thick hedges and from between
massed with the honeysuckle
skin has been punctured
desk a fresh garden of flowers

folder of drawings and music
the strange pull of magnetism
harsh rattle in the throat
crow a yellow silk handkerchief

trouser with strings of silver
say it of a sea nettle
chair set and drinking his seventh
still waters would close over
VII.

Under his arm the telegrams
at last struck a wooden fence
fallen like the breath
deep chair with an open book

uncorking a smoky bottle
damp grass to cool heated
cigarettes and even cigars
when dense clouds lain between

glaring with gas recalled
cap on the floor and hands folded
briskly back to the daydream
where cold found a warm stove

lamplight coming from the window
approached the wire wicket
cocktail on the terrace over the sea
turned around and seen
VIII.

In front of the church before mass
all the pangs of suffocation
men standing near the prow
in the desert worth as much

noble trees and flowers no end
game and delicacies out of season
shivering dropped on the pillow
mingled shine and darkness

the sharp ringing and swishing
tiny waves in showers of pearl
between the rows of ancient pillars
poured the sweet smells

stain beneath the spot of sky
a roll of linen and a sack of oatmeal
sketched an outline of that dead
with the regularity of a machine
IX.

Whether to drink some tea
never left the patient’s room
train raced on and only at daybreak
catching at the last straw

sewed it up before drunk
done well with three diamonds
out of sight and the night chill
striking furiously with its cane

the sun on the banks of the river
clock laid on the table beside
the high marble chambers
elderly with a bunch of jasmines

sets of combs and mirrors
glass of champagne another fine brandy
summer in the shade of an elm
tROUT rising and salmon
X.

The plains unfolded before
pine wood and roofed with silver
the spotted skin of a panther
flowers spread on the table

could these drops the doctor gave
groaning for the fear of waking
shake the jewels onto the ground
another with a wooden ladle

seemed to flash back and forth
an organ an altar and sacrifices
fatigued by the heat and the work
the dull glitter of tipsiness

in the dusty day broke
burrs in the hair and smelling
weather beaten by the steppe
made the sound into the cup
XI.

Bit of grit in the eye
   careful with rule and square
down at the foot of an oak
   round with arms raw and red

the door in the hall opened
last vibrations of a church organ
stirred suddenly by the splash
gnarled fingers and pretended to read

when the stag began to moan
onto the highway leading along
wade through the tobacco smoke
blown out all the color

the child and an iron pot
alone in the bare carriage
on the carpet below the bed
hunger and thirst as you sit
XII.

Knots of light marking
north side of lichened pines
ceaseless whirling of a flint stone
emerges from the sour gloom

snatched aside the curtains
the rushes and colored the water
come to light by accident
both hands still in his pockets

safe into the drawing room
those of bees in a glass hive
the newspaper into the envelope
heavy beam lifted and lowered

buried his head in the pillow
thin ramp to unload a barge
the sudden great light in it
seen smoking in the mist
XIII.

The moon upon an ocean of sand
  giving a cry that froze
large field an abandoned tract
on the windowsill lay crusts

the abating songs of skylarks
  into the neck of a bottle
walk right down the lane
hundred feet of canvas as if

tin of coffee spilled out
the sun’s light and the fruits
far across the lower landscape
tremor passed through the herd

down in a chair before the hearth
drank scotch and soda
seasons by the coal mine
in the body like a crowd
XIV.

To light the bridal chamber
the doorway and string the beans
little shoes hanging on a thorn
the city in a purple mist

sound upon the incense altar
cream was not a bit too grand
turned back to the outer room
set a chair for a handbag

a distance the slow sweet bells
overboard before the crank
a rush of water and of wind
there the path that leads to water

might have cried out in sleep
twisted about the feet and bitten
the slender light of the candle
people down there in the dark
XV.

Going down the lanes next morning
men leaning against the wall
drowsily the grassy rocks
waveri ng candlelight of the shop

a goldfish in a glass bowl
poplars on the farther bank
quivering on the dry ferns
stare at the bench for a time

under the fence with a bundle
peach stones he came off with
advertisements of coaches and hotels
the roads in a worse state

at last free to breathe noisily
doors close of themselves
sit here patching and gossiping
spread your elbows at the board
XVI.

The halting beauty of the desert
curtains in some tapestry hanging
noiseless march of the sundial
pressing the key into a hand

cove where pink shells crunched
tROUT stream and two ways to walk
in linen leaning on a stick
valley road up in the shade

on the mountains the wild animals
lamps lighted one by one
the brooding of the dead day
a haystack in the open air

ringlets caught among the precious
light steps over the window
whole cave echoed to the cry
gathering under the trees
XVII.

Ladle up the melted hours
a snap in the air and a change
chair just against the knees
pages and pages of sketches

a spark from the wood fire
filament in the very bulb
on the broad arm of the chair
the taste of pennies and stopped

the log house burned down
view blocked by low buildings
smelt of cigars and where the heat
in this world and escapes the wrath

the pale light of dawn
red partridges among the rubble
strong glass of brandy and water
after a minute he was struck
Gust of hot wind blew against an oak to pant a little shadows encircled the eyes set the shoulder and pushed the roofs and chimney pots open windows and then the murmur leaning elegantly in the seat up against a wall and shoot in through the wire that night gently and carry it into the tent entered with a kerosene lamp dressings had all come down dull ache starts in the thighs instrument that was to compass still on the sofa lying down with him on the dead leaves
XIX.

Charmed with the patter of the rain
of that darkness and that light
the tones of everyday politeness
opened the door into the street
red apron and began to sort
scraps of food left at the table
voice the loudest in the hymn
view of the green garden

old man wrapped in furs and a lady
coming around to the cabins
set light to a bundle of bracken
houses of where and how to knock

carried daisies in the hand
up to faint light of the evening
red seal on the envelope
comfortably upon an armchair
CHAPTER 3

ON THE PLATE AND HIS LIPS

From the kitchen another Bolognese dish
I say, says the man, the steaming plate
hovers above him unaccustomed to eating

Bolognese unaccustomed to eating anything
rich and red his white napkin stuffed
into his collar he spreads his arms wide

like a hawk fork and knife he settles
into his chair some tired happy hawk
he clicks his dress shoes on the ground

like a beak his fledgling tongue crests
as he pushes each bite into his mouth
the man enjoys his Bolognese he wipes

his mouth with a wing he stands
to drink the last of his water before
he trots on tiny bird legs to the door
THE FEW SMALL TIES / FLUTTER FROM A LIGHTEST BODY

The thought enters the mind, inspects the floor, and, pacing in a circle, lies down. If I might lurch. If in lurching end it. The thought warms its side before a homespun fire. If by lying one might apprehend. If apprehension might profit by standing.

The thought does not know what it will produce, only what it has.

Lurch to the point of becoming sick. The wheel of light opens like a bank vault door. If and when the bank vault.

If and when to mine the capital within. To find and mine it. The thought sleeps on the floor, then, waking cold, pulls in its legs. If and when the bank vault. If and when the waking cold again.
THE GRAIN A SEA OF SWITCHES

Imagine there is something unusual about the guard the way he leans
as he stands he rotates his weight around the edge of each foot the guard
at the gate set at the gate to safeguard the iron bars to stand still set in his uniform guarding his fealty guarding his tendency to imagine there is something unusual about the look on his face he remembers a day at a lake he is home holding a coat his uniform memories flat in his hands those gold buttons reflect the world the guard keeps out so that when the guard nods and steps from the gate the buttons reflect the iron bars sway in gold on their hinges
The man is the first reader of his own work
he goes to the airport and forgets who he is
he pulls through the sky the fabric of life
fastens his seatbelt while sedated
sets a bag on the tray table
he pulls up his sleeve as though
he has a watch, his insides cloven
he doesn’t think he can be surprised
his hands feel like hooves on the pages
the man is capable of moving quickly
the man does not move quickly
he skips stones on the paper
HE COULD SIT IN THE CULVERT AND SEE

The guard set ready near the driver
engine throbbing the pavement those dry

streets the guard does not fix his glove
even when the glove sags on his wrist

the guard does that elsewhere he is waiting
if you move against the guard he moves

the club against you moves the nightstick
against the assailant set and ready

he considers the image shifts his toes
in his boots considers the man’s arrival

the way he will reach across his body
to hinge the door of the car hand the man

so to speak the reins the guard turns
from his post to face the world to peer

into the fog rising in the alley adjacent
the guard begins to pace before realizing

it is not yet time he startles to his position
and when it is time begins to pace
THE FEW SMALL TIES / FLUTTER FROM A LIGHTEST BODY

To hinge the door open black door  
black grate hinged and it’s loud  
through the tunnels a shock that grate  
that pothole pried loose the rustling  
dirty fingers that single note as it breaks  
free. That single note that note in the  
minding the note, a small, feathery thing,  
the mind breaks free from pretenses  
the mind is free from pretenses  
the mind pretends that is to say it acts  
in a way it did not before the mind loose  
in the mind becomes a small, stuttering thing,  
arms full of ideas.
HE SETS THE GLOBE / ADRIFT IN THE GRASS

Boy notes with precision his surroundings
the wooden desk loose in the grass

boy draws the hard pulse of the grain
capillaries filling with ink the pen

that blade into the wood of a tree
the grasses in relation to the blade

the desk sidles up to his legs the way
the sun falls in particles here and slow

in a wave there draws small black arrows
to denote how light reflects off the plain

white surface of the lake boy did not draw
a single line there and yet the surroundings

suggest a surface resonant and smooth
Dear Sister

Just look, and the spent writing bird and ripple over forest paths, you want to do a cable to her ancestors somehow I do not mind, because a father or a good thing I did, and there I was. Color wheel still spinning, so I set to that abandon, because you cannot say that. While I take care of my mother, it hurts me to know, and I hope that.
BIG CULVERT OPEN / SO WALK IN

Boy notices from a long way off a dog
the field his vantage feels crowded boy
gathers his drawings then trips the mess
of leaves feathers through air spreads
on the ground some dark mass trodden
over boy cries stop but the crowd shifts
forward crooning as if to some spectacle
or craning as if from some fear boy
cannot tell he watches him darkly the rise
of his hard silhouette he outlines
in hot black ink the pen so sharp
to slice the paper so the crowd surges
in bold line upon him his desk that rampart
his hand with a whirr begins to draw
DEAR SISTER

These days, now only white balloons in the sky. To install a strip of foam the little finger perches on the clock tower of wood and paper, all the sun, where Wednesday does not flatten out under the curve of trees. When a child brought new spices, nutmeg perhaps, or rosemary, these days all I can think: I have my dinner table, trees.
THE LINE FOR PHOTOGRAPHS / STALLING

Boy pricks a hole in a piece of white paper lifts the sheet to his eye to watch

the world bustle around him that circus menagerie of colors waxing the noise

men and women on their routes to work dance as they pass him shaking bright

ribbons boy cannot capture the visions that walk by him cannot do it cannot jot

their colors make note of their succession he presses his forehead into the paper

crumple a stony outline of his face holds
YOU, THERE

I.

Stand before a lake or a picture
of a lake it doesn’t matter a charcoal
drawing of a lake where drawing
before you picture the lake before
you experience sunlight in patches
moss on stone a lone birdcall interrupts
molding soil here silt gathers in spots
on canvas your hands the drawing
well lit twenty or so bulbs splay angles
the stark white room the silver frame set
like a window your perspective draws
you into the scene enter the cold lake
your floppy backstroke the tree line
crosshatched above might draw you rising
toes pointed from the bottom might draw
the light to pastel dusk or you
up beyond the line of trees painting
but knowing you reading the poem
and thinking you might paint
but knowing full well you will never paint
Ministrations of the wood
in much light

      sparrow slung eave to eave
      racing shadow racing & bowing
      in its arc

flash
like shifting leaves

the surface of the water unruly
each leaf its own sunlight

downward mirroring & flow
the wind shifts
bits of light

moves with the sun
to pant
      in the wood
      rich smell of wood

under the eaves birds drop from
thick in the air
III.

Begin water & salient
leaves onto its surface
water & rest there

these all fall
give surface to the water
the way debris settles

& unsettles ripples in wind
piling up the colors
its reflection the far side

look on the debris
the distant hills the sparrow
even the mountains
LIKE A LITTLE BELL HE TREMBLES

The guard paces in the garden a tune bright in his head he longs to whistle surrounded by blooming plants he forgets his duty he forgets what he protects whether man or jewels in the garden he cannot imagine danger were he to whistle he would sustain each note long and doleful the song unbidden must be doleful for he cannot sing the guard forbids himself to think any longer about the song he would light against the cold the guard sets his face and thinks of marching appropriates his tread