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## *Strange Love, Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Poem*

by Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

### *When I met My Muse*

I glanced at her and took my glasses  
off – they were still singing. They buzzed  
like a locust at the coffee table and then  
ceased. Her voice belled forth, and the  
sunlight bent. I felt the ceiling arch, and  
knew that nails up there took a new grip  
on whatever they touched. “I am your own  
way of looking at things,” she said. “When  
you allow me to live with you, every  
glance at the world around you will be  
a sort of salvation.” And I took her hand.

-- William Stafford

The summer I was 14, something strange happened to me – I met my muse and fell in love with poetry. I switched on a dime one afternoon from drawing like a maniac to writing like a maniac, catalyzed by a friend who spent six hours on a tiny corner of a pen-and-ink drawing, convincing me I wasn't patient enough for art, and by my parents' long divorce that played out in neither moving out of the house but instead battling a la "War of the Roses" for a year. I needed to create something to survive, so I left behind abstract pictures of trees, snakes and people to write poems about loneliness, despair and the futility of the world.

Within a few months, I was flunking high school English because I couldn't understand a word of Beowulf. My teacher, Judith Rance-Rooney – who I'm still in touch with today – sat me down one rainy afternoon, and said – kindly because I couldn't help having a single-digit IQ, “I know you're trying so I'm going to give you a D-.” I just nodded.

Then one day, Ms. Rance-Rooney was absent, leaving a note for us to write a sonnet. No problem, I had been writing sonnets for weeks, happily entranced with ABAB rhyme schemes and iambic pentameter. I wrote about loneliness, despair, and the futility of the world, but it was a good sonnet, and when Ms. Rance-Rooney got back the next day, she was amazed at how smart I got in a

hurry. "You're a poet," she said, and because I needed to believe I was something worthy, I decided to believe her.

From then on, I made my way into the previously forbidden teacher's lounge at lunch time to read her a haiku I wrote about chocolate milk containers or a sestina on futility. While the other teachers took long drags on their Marlboros and downed stale coffee, Ms. Rance-Rooney praised whatever I wrote, and give me some new poets to read. Having only read Rod McKuen up to this point, I was blown away to find e.e. cummings and T.S. Eliot, who seemed (and still do) like the odd couple, one free and reckless, and the other paying the bills and trimming the hedges. I poured over Daddy Eliot's "Burn Norton," mesmerized by its intellectual gymnastics, such as these lines:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.

I equally loved Mama cummings' love poems, and how his ecstatic language blasted away conventional grammar, such as in this poem some of you may have had heard Carmen Diaz recite in the movie, *In Her Shoes*:

*i carry your heart with me*

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in  
my heart) i am never without it (anywhere  
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing, my darling) i fear  
no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i want  
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

I found an ancient copy of Elizabeth Barret Brownings' *Sonnets from the Portuguese* – named so because her boyfriend, Robert Browning, called her “the little Portuguese” – and didn't memorize “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways,” but a darker sonnet:

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand  
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore  
Alone upon the threshold of my door  
Of individual life, I shall command  
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand  
Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
Without the sense of that which I forbore -  
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land  
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine  
With pulses that beat double. What I do  
And what I dream include thee, as the wine  
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue  
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,  
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

Suing God? The tears of two in the eyes of one? Thy touch upon the palm? High school could never live up to this poem, which showed me ways to mix deep yearnings with images of sunlight or landscape, using metaphors to prove what Kansas poet William Stafford says: “Language can do what it can't say.”

I read Shakespeare, John Donne, John Keats, George Herbert, Walt Whitman; whenever I entered a bookstore, I raced straight for the poetry section, finding H.D., Langston Hughes, Denise Levertov, bad girl Muriel Rukeyser, and bad boy Allen Ginsburg. From there, my strange love blossomed. When a boy I liked ignored me, I wrote poetry. When my parents fought in court, I read poetry. When I flunked the biology test or ate too much cake, poetry. I navigated the rocky hormonal seas of all those teen years by saving my pennies to buy thick paperbacks of poetry in very small print, where I discovered Wallace Stevens and how “One must have a mind of winter/ To regard the frost and the boughs/ Of the pine-trees crusted with snow” and cold, delicious plums someone left in William Carlos Williams' fridge. I filled blank books and notebooks with my writing.

Around that time, I read that to be a poet, a person had to be very aware, so I sent myself to awareness boot camp, geeky but useful. Riding in the back of the school bus I narrated in my mind everything in great detail: the green plastic mailbox leaning to the right with a tattered “Vote for Jimmy Carter” bumper sticker, a balding woman in a housedress sitting in a folding chair to read the paper, the way certain leaves look like green stars. I filled my journals with little observations, training my mind to translate world into word.

Over 20 years later, I wrote a poem, which opened my second book of poetry, *Animals in the House*, about how I saw myself those years, and how poetry let me understand my fears and yearnings, limitations and expansiveness in metaphor:

### *Girl*

When I was a girl I didn't know  
I was a girl. I thought I was  
more of a pigment, a choral tone,  
some kind of weather that disrupts  
everyone's life in the living room.  
I knocked over the cast iron iron again,  
and this time it broke. *How could  
you break an iron iron?* they yelled,  
but how could I not? The weight of  
metal on the earth, wanting to return.  
When money was missing, I thought surely  
I must have taken it.  
When it rained, a hurricane this time,  
I thought, *see what you've done now.*  
I didn't believe in cause and effect, elements of  
surprise, or the slim chance meetings  
that changed everyone's lives. I didn't know  
that people were supposed to end,  
contained as vases to hold  
whatever you gave them.

I thought we were more like land, islands even,  
unfurling slowly in the brown  
haze of the sea. I thought there was water  
everywhere, pouring us into changeable  
shapes – leaf or puppy or branch. All falling  
toward wherever it came from  
not afraid or surprised,  
not bad or tricked into good.

All falling back into the horizons that come  
each evening to meet the fire.

When it was time for college, I wanted to jump into the fire of full-frontal, full-force poetry, but my father convinced me that as a writer, I only had two choices: advertising or journalism. I went to journalism school at the University of Missouri, wrongly thinking that writing magazine features would feed my poet's soul and pay the rent, but somehow, between my burgeoning interest in social change, and round-peg-in-square-hole experience in each journalism class, I ended up with a history degree. Go figure! Mostly, I studied unrequited love and creative writing, which made for very cliched poems about love, loneliness and despair.

I also learned from creative writing classes the “rules” of what a person shouldn't ever write about, namely over-the-top love poems, poetry about grandmothers and cats, and poems that repeat or even use cliches, such as the line “I Love You.” Since then, I've made it my business to break all those rules repeatedly. Here's one example from my first book of poetry, *Lot's Wife*, and in case you're not current on your fairy tales, the broken mirror is from Hans Christian Anderson's tale, “The Snow Queen,” in which a mirror rises up to the sky, laughing so hard that it breaks into a million pieces, each falling into someone to seed bits of evil into the world:

### ***I Love You***

I love you without knowing what it means  
no matter how many trees climb uselessly,  
the clouds dangerous in their sheen.  
I love you stupid as any tree thinking  
the grass is useless, the sky background  
noise, the sprinkler a god, the wide mouthed  
lake a mirror to leave and never return to.

I let myself fall on the bed slow motion  
because I love you without knowing anything  
about how this fall will take my whole life.  
The earth fixed in orbit. Your hands climb me  
in surprise, a trellis made of bones. Everything  
between us like weather  
that is never about destination but dropping intent.

Do you know how many times  
I've stared at the curve of your cheekbone  
thinking this has nothing to do with me?  
But as soon as your eyes notice, the walls  
of the room fall slow motion out all directions  
we're holding each other without touching  
or touching. I'm trying to look at you in the dark  
that isn't the negation of space but a shaping thing --  
a way to unspill color back to whatever we were  
before this body or after. Just beyond your lips,  
the teeth guarding the skull that will survive you.  
I love your skin replacing itself  
at the speed of light spent  
through window panes on this slate of daylight,  
where I cannot stop saying,  
I love you blind. I love you long.  
I love you over the crest of the water  
the air the babies the branches  
walking beneath birds  
to will into being by loving away the will.  
I love you halfway up the life where we lay  
body doubles for how well we'd love if the body was about  
to turn back to wind. I stop climbing  
and say I love you glistening  
with one of the million slivers of the evil mirror  
imbedded in my heart. I love you  
from the bottom of my smashed mirror.  
Don't you see, nothing is impenetrable?

My literature classes helped me transition from my beloved dead white male poets to my newly-  
beloved alive women and people of color poets, particularly striking up a mentorship with the late  
Adrienne Rich, one of our premier feminist poets, who I never met. Through reading her poetry and  
prose, I found ways to write more directly to the reader, and to write about the world beyond my little  
heartaches. In her poem, "Atlas for a Difficult World," she writes of a woman beaten, and then says,

I don't want to know  
wreckage, dreck and waste, but these are the materials  
and so are the slow lift of the moon's belly  
over wreckage, dreck, and waste, wild treefrogs calling in  
another season, light and music still pouring over  
our fissured, cracked terrain.

The idea that all the bad in life, and all the good too, are the materials still inspires

me.

Around that time, I moved to Kansas City, wrote for a labor newspaper by day and for myself by night until my job suddenly ended, the owner of the paper saying he didn't ever believe in women being journalists. I wandered over to the state commission on human rights to file a sex discrimination complaint, but instead, they offered me a job as intake officer, listening to homeless people tell me their life stories while I gently explained to them that their problems fell outside what our agency could address. Throughout it all, I wrote poetry, but I left my intake officer job after eight months to do political organizing for five exhausting years – first helping coordinate a coalition of energy-related groups and labor unions to lobby for energy conservation, then coordinating a coalition of social service organizations. While I was effective at bulk mailings, strategizing on political lobbying, and fundraising, the effort left me too tired to write much, so no wonder that when the last coalition I worked for lost its funding, I went back to college at KU, this time majoring in poetry for my master's and doctorate.

I also started teaching, and found, to my great surprise, that teaching was also one of the great loves of my life. It was a little like getting paid to taste-test homemade ice cream for me to teach poetry, write poetry, edit my poetry, and study some more poetry. For my doctoral exam, I needed to be fluent in 50 poets from Chaucer to the present, so I threw myself into reading old friends and making new ones, dead or living it didn't matter.

One of the new poets I discovered, and did another secret internship with, was Sharon Olds, who writes in breathlessly ecstatic ways, speaking of the most personal and the most profound with courage and precision. She writes about sex, the body, motherhood and marriage in searing detail.

Here's one of her least racy poems, sports fans:

***Topography***

After we flew across the country we  
got in bed, laid our bodies  
delicately together, like maps laid



face to face, East to West, my  
San Francisco against your New York, your  
Fire Island against my Sonoma, my  
New Orleans deep in your Texas, your Idaho  
bright on my Great Lakes, my Kansas  
burning against your Kansas your Kansas  
burning against my Kansas, your Eastern  
Standard Time pressing into my  
Pacific Time, my Mountain Time  
beating against Your Central Time, your  
sun rising swiftly from the right my  
sun rising swiftly from the left your  
moon rising slowly from the left my  
moon rising slowly from the right until  
all four bodies of the sky  
burn above us, sealing us together,  
all our cities twin cities,  
all our states united, one  
nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

I also found another poet to follow around like an infatuated puppy – one I had deemed too archaic before, never taking the time before to read her carefully enough to understand she was anything but. I latched onto Emily Dickinson because I fell in love with the lines, “I cannot live with you/ it would be life/ and life is there, behind the shelf.” Besides realizing many of her rhyming poems could be sung to the theme for Gilligan's Island, I found she twisted and folded language to make new meanings and new sense. In one of my favorite Dickinson poems, she writes of grief so viscerally that when I encountered some of the larger stretch of grief in my life, it is this poem I turn to:

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,  
And Mourners to and fro  
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed  
That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,  
A Service, like a Drum –  
Kept beating – beating – till I thought  
My Mind was going numb –

And then I heard them lift a Box  
And creak across my Soul  
With those same Boots of Lead, again,  
Then Space – began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race  
Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down –  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing – then –

I went on to teach at Haskell Indian Nations University, and because it made sense to incorporate Native American writers into what I taught, I started reading like crazy, particularly Linda Hogan, Mary Tall Mountain, Leslie Marmon Silko, and N. Scott Momaday. Then there's Joy Harjo, who shows us how much poetry is an art form between music and prose. In her poem, "Remember," she repeats a word like a drum or heart beating, tapping open the heart of the listener.

### *Remember*

Remember the sky that you were born under,  
know each of the star's stories.  
Remember the moon, know who she is. I met her  
in a bar once in Iowa City.  
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the  
strongest point of time. Remember sundown  
and the giving away to night.  
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled  
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of  
her life, and her mother's, and hers.  
Remember your father. He is your life, also.  
Remember the earth whose skin you are:  
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth  
brown earth, we are earth.  
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their  
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,  
listen to them. They are alive poems.  
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the  
origin of this universe. I heard her singing Kiowa war  
dance songs at the corner of Fourth and Central once.  
Remember that all is in motion, is growing, is you.  
Remember that language comes from this.  
Remember the dance that language is, that life is.  
Remember.

-- Joy Harjo

I regularly remember the dance that language is through writing and also through something

that two things I started doing for a living in the 1990s: teaching in Goddard College's low-residency program, in which I worked one-on-one with students designing their own masters degrees, and leading community writing workshops. Never mind that the college is in Vermont, the students live anywhere in the world, and we all meet up at the college for a week each summer and winter for students to craft their own curriculum for the semester, meet with faculty and for everyone to go to a lot of workshops, readings and celebrations. After we all go back home, my students send me packets of their work every three weeks, and basically, for the last 16 years, I've spent ample time in coffee shops writing my students long, individualized letters on my laptop about how to go deeper into their studies. This dialogue-based learning is the kind of education that helps you discover your life's work.

Speaking of which, I started doing community writing workshops based on a notion that people wanted to learn the craft of poetry, but the people who came needed most to tell their stories, to be witnessed by their community, and to witness each other. From my workshop participants, I learned how poetry was not just an art of the elite, or in my case, the obsessed, but a gift for expression, understanding, self-discovery, healing, and transformation. Whether I work with a group of rural teens, Kansas City Latinos, or women of color in a housing project, I've realized that strong writing comes from people speaking in their own voice, telling their own truths.

In recent years, I've been leading writing workshops for people with serious illness – mostly cancer, m.s., parkinson's and heart disease – something I started when I was diagnosed with breast cancer seven years ago. At first, I was careful to make sure all the writing prompts were open-ended so that people could write about their cars or their cancer, mothers-in-law in metastases, no pressure to share what they were going through, but participants wanted to write and talk directly about death and dying, illness and despair, to share what they couldn't share elsewhere. This poem, by a workshop participant living with late-stage cancer, is part of an anthology *My Tree Called Life: Writing & Living Through Serious Illness*, which I edited:

***The Blaring, Clear Knowledge Of A Survivor***

I planted tulip bulbs today.  
“About time,” my neighbor calls,  
seeing a pile of weeds where I dig.  
I smile. He doesn’t understand  
this is no fall tidying.  
It is a deviant act of courage  
with the blaring clear knowledge of a survivor.  
Grief survivor.  
Overdose survivor.  
Cancer survivor in the making.  
And my wild heart sees a beautiful spring.  
– Alex Thompson

Writing this poem, just like planting the bulbs, was her deviant act of courage, and that in itself enriched her life. I've been learning, to paraphrase Audre Lorde that poetry is not a luxury. As an African-American, lesbian feminist, marginalized in three ways, she spoke of how poetry, particularly for those silenced or ignored in our culture, “...is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.”

Witnessing this truth in writing workshops, my students' writing, and my own writing, I felt called to found Transformative Language Arts, the first masters degree in the country focused on social and personal transformation through the spoken and written word, which began in 2000 at Goddard College. Our students – storytellers, poets, spoken word performers, memoir writers – come to deepen their art of words, and to develop generative community projects – such as storytelling for elders in nursing homes, poetry workshops for people living with HIV/AIDS, memoir classes for people in prison. One of our graduates hands out journals in a cancer ward, another leads writing workshops for African-American women CEOs, and another started an ecological writing center to help people use their words to protect and restore the more-than-human world.

Many of us have found how much poetry is like like those little capsules you drop into water so they can expand into an giraffe-shaped sponge. Although you can't really wash the dishes with a poem, it can land in you and unfold into something bright and enduring. The poetry I use when I facilitate

workshops mostly speaks directly to readers, offering them hope and vision through language, such as – oddly enough – this poem by a poet known for hard drinking, womanizing, drug usage and motorcycle bars:

*the laughing heart*

your life is your life.  
don't let it be clubbed into dank  
submission.  
be on the watch.  
there are ways out.  
there is light somewhere.  
it may not be much light but  
it beats the  
darkness  
be on the watch.  
the gods will offer you  
chances.  
know them, take them.  
you can't beat death but  
you can beat death  
in life,  
sometimes.  
and the more often you  
learn to do it,  
the more light there will  
be.  
your life is your life.  
know it while you have  
it.  
you are marvelous  
the gods wait to delight  
in  
you.

-- Charles Bukowski

I invite workshop participants to take a line – such as “your life is your life” or “there are ways out,” – write it down as the first line of their own poem, and then keep writing. Reading poetry makes for a great diving board into writing poetry. Here is my own take on that poem and writing prompt:

*Your Life is Your Life*

Know this when you must lie  
completely still on the steel table  
while the glass plate presses down

on your chest. Your life  
obviously your life. Dream it back  
into your memory for when  
the kool-aid-colored chemo  
is pumped into the plastic port  
in your clavicle. Tell yourself  
this when the doctor comes in  
to talk with you, carrying  
a small box of tissues. Don't  
forget then how your life is  
your life, not when the phone rings  
at the wrong time, or the biopsy needle  
inserted in your left breast shoots  
its click near your heart. Your life beats  
loud and often. Your life  
surges against itself  
in at least some cells so tell it  
your life is your life  
when you sit, naked from  
the waist up on the examining table.  
Your life there talking with  
the pharmacist or here on the couch  
is your life. Pick it up  
and hold it close  
especially when the wait  
is long and the news is bad.  
Tell your life what it is.

This poem was part of my chapbook, *Reading the Body*, composed of poetry about living through cancer, surgeries, chemo and the aftermath, and writing was so vital to my own recovery that I brought my oncologist pages each chemo treatment. To his credit, he put all those pages into my file and read them. Many people related to the medical profession are finding the necessity for writing through illness to reframe health and life – a new tradition emerging around the world called Poetic Medicine or Narrative Medicine. As poet Mary Oliver says, “Poetry is a life-cherishing force. For poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary in the pockets of the hungry.”

Poetry is a way of feeding that hunger, bearing the darkness, cherishing life. Or another way to say this: John Keats's famous ending to “Ode to a Grecian Urn” – “Beauty is Truth, Truth/ Beauty, that is all ye need to know in life, and all ye need to know.” The beautiful is the real, vibrant, humming with

life . Poetry then helps expand our ability to perceive the world – to “treat the world as if it really exists,” writes William Stafford, who's been my secret poetry teacher for over 20 years, never mind that he died in 1993. Stafford also says this about poetry:

Poetry is the kind of thing you have to see from the corner of your eye. You can be too well prepared for poetry. A conscientious interest in it is worse than no interest at all, as I believe Frost used to say. It's like a very faint star. If you look straight at it you can't see it, but if you look a little to one side it is there.

If people around you are in favor, that helps poetry to *be*, to exist. It disappears under disfavor. There are things, you know, human things, that depend on commitment; poetry is one of those things. If you analyze it away, it's gone. It would be like boiling a watch to find out what makes it tick.

If you let your thought play, turn things this way and that, be ready for liveliness, alternatives, new views, the possibility of another world – you are in the area of poetry. A poem is a serious joke, a truth that has learned *jujitsu*. Anyone who breathes is in the rhythm business; anyone who is alive is caught up in the imminences, the doubts mixed with the triumphant certainty of poetry.

Speaking of the triumphant certainty, poetry doesn't seem like just a strange love despite the antics of Dr. Strangelove. Yet knowing how much poetry is rooted in juxtapositions of like with unlike – like white chickens and red wheelbarrows – I kept looking for a connection.

In the film, Dr. Strangelove parodies the American hunger for dominance and aggressive in the nuclear age, not to mention cowboy generals riding atomic bombs, showing us in an inside-out way the folly of anything but the path of peace. I thought of this when I found this quote from Pablo Neruda, one of our greatest Latin American poets: “Poetry is an act of peace. Peace goes into the making of a poet like flour goes into the making of bread.” Poetry helped me make a place of peace for myself during a time of domestic warfare, and how poetry continued to give me guiding metaphors for my life during times of great challenge, loss and confusion. For my students, workshop participants and my own life, poetry is an extraordinary flashlight with batteries that last lifetimes, something people can use to help them see where to take the next step, not not to trip over tree roots or walk into the path of oncoming Hummers. Also, if you can name the darkness, it's far easier to keep moving through it or to

acknowledge that you're stuck here for a while, but you have lots of good company.

Poetry may be deemed a strange love in a culture beset with Wii Fit, bloody blockbusters, and botoxed, bosomy real housewives of seemingly, reality shows based on who can be the loudest and cruelest, and texting twittering nothings everywhere. Yet poetry can strip away the bad goods of culture enough so that we can see what's real, what's generative, what's ours. As W.S. Merwin writes in the “The Gift”:

I have to trust what was given to me  
if I am to trust anything  
it led the stars over the shadowless mountain  
what does it not remember in its night and silence  
what does it not hope knowing itself no child of time

what did it not begin what will it not end  
I have to hold it up in my hands as my ribs hold up my heart  
I have to let it open its wings and fly among the gifts of the unknown....

Poetry has led me to a more constant connection with what's sacred in life, a way to speak to and of the life force – “the force that through the green fuse drives the flower” as Dylan Thomas calls it – like the myriad names for God in Judaism, each a way to circle around the fire of what's holy, what's alive, what's fueling our lives, our connections with each other, our deepest work in this world.

At the same time, whenever I sit down to write a poem, I always think, “I don't know how to do this.” Poetry makes each moment feel like what it is: familiar but new, uncharted, open with possibilities. In this way, poetry lands us in the mystery of reality all the time. All we need to do is being willing to begin again on each blank page, and in blank moment.

All we need to do is put our ear to the universe, and listen to what's being dreamt all around us:

#### The Dreaming Land

I dream of spring, when the sky dampens  
the seeds of gathering heat, the diving crow  
aims toward what was just born, and  
even the driveway gravel glitters in the stark  
white light between storm and night.  
I dream of the winter's black-and-white landscape  
scribbled green, punctured by the maroon tip of root



in a field cleaned black with fire while  
the cottonwoods unfurl their pale green hearts.

This land dreams sky, a shifting infusion  
of shadow on cloud, despite the unreliability  
of rain or clarity. The deer dream fawns.  
The fawns dream flight as they walk the through-line  
of the horizon. The horizon never stops dreaming,  
its sleep a progression of filtering color through space.

The dream always dreams possibility  
juxtaposed against decay, lightning, first  
redbud blossom or starling feather stuck on a rooftop.  
The rooftop dreams, belly up, to the sky,  
its dream a song of shelter and risk.

The sky dreams light rolling away from dark,  
dark rolling away from light, expansive as sorrow  
that permeates the porous souls of everything  
from weather to the dog left alone in the living room  
while I step outside into the dizzy of bird call,  
flocks pouring down onto branches  
swollen with the hard dreams of blossom.