

Four Poems

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Tract House

In swathes of remnant farm
 behind our own new-minted ranches,
one of three models strung

like freight cars up our treeless asphalt
 slab of subdivision's grid,
lay fields of wild straw- and bay-

berry, thigh-high grasses,
 sassafras groves the earth-diggers
tore & ground into bloody craters

of Jersey shale, heaped aside
 into mammoth shapes we ran
the spines of, but most alluring

were the blonde skeletons
 of pressure-treated lumber
erected over poured concrete cellars,

sawdust chapels rank with pine resin
 chromium, arsenic,
toxic mixes we knew well, mosquito trucks

in summer spewing DDT
 on backyard picnic tables,
plumes of poison we chased on bikes

& roller skates. The construction crews
disappeared for weeks on end
as rain drilled a file of half-done jobs,

making moats of foundations
some boys floated through
on scrapped 2 by 4s and pallets. And if a man

emerged once from nearby scrub
to expose his strange, pale crotch,
we screamed until he disappeared

into the dusk that called us
in to supper. But first I'd stay & stroke
the splintered suggestion of rooms,

step through doorless doors,
a way to make the way things were
undone. Then run.

His Creeks

aren't really his, but who attends
 them more, riparian corridors
 that course in riffles undulant

or in triplet falls, now clear & flecked
 with ice, now mossed, sultry
 through silted banks, beneath

a may-fly's dangling earring.
 Whether fed by spring or seep,
 they run by forces grave

& sometimes pool to glass
 that shows another world,
 the minute warren rooms

of halved black walnuts, starry
 leaf-litter, a stalwart stand
 of cress. A brace of minnows.

Love's deep stare. And who else names
 or cares to name them,
 gliding over gravel, coarser cobble,

monikers writ on water,
 as they say. A script of erasure,
 but for his face.

Spring Cleaning

Always too soon to impart
how long the re-cast heart

will last. Literally, I mean.
The stiff ground, greening,

awaits where we are going,
patience a violence, sowing

hope despite itself. Despair not,
one might hazard, yard

already mostly stalwart weeds.
Welcome, rough straits,

ascendant. Spider webs older
than the years transpired

since we first—. Let them be.
The fly's carcass, too. Plight's debris.

*Golden Joinery**kintsugi*

When the pale, striated side-
winders in the yard's loam
are halved by shovel head,

& each part goes its way,
O endless self, how not know
the soul, the brain, in many parts,

a bowl shattered then repaired
with red-blond resins exuded
from insects & powdered

with gold-dust mimicked tonight
by trunks of stripped trees
that hold the hold of day's last hours

as a cut pine, left too long
inside, will brittle, fill a room
with the sweet honeycomb of birth,

what we have been, each seam
a soldered gleam of breakage
& repair. Is this history,

light's amber varnish
(from *vernix*, sheen of waxen caul
in which we're ridden forth)

over neck, forehead, torso.
fret of wrinkles, every fractured
shard made one again?