Ruins of Tredegar

The ironworks along the James, thriving once on cannon and ball, lean along rocks shattered and unkempt, currents like puddlers and rollers. Fire cleanses, forgets. I saw history from the distant bridge above the battles. The wrecked landscape wanted justice, or was that the wrong word? Post-bellum showpieces overran the farms, tossed shadow on ash, consecrated remains. Memory is the nutshell of monuments, the avenue down which ride, in proud array, Stuart, Jackson, Lee, frozen in bronze, out of date. Take popular song as memento mori.
Moors

Mists waded the fields, stone by stone
drowned, bleached, drowned again.
The land took the texture of damp burlap.
Even bedsheets in the half-closed

hotel could have wrung out a pint of water.
The half-skies were unorthodox, fertile
with gloom, an unwritten psalter
for tourists who came to watch the sheep.

In draggled wool spray-painted along the flank,
they were members of the local rugby club.
You raised your hand in broken salute.
The sun stood at the horizon like a dead battery.
Nature swore there was nothing in it,
the blockbuster trees felled by Hurricane Frances,
sinkholes that plunged a thousand feet,
drilled by an auger. You, too, suffered

renovation, opened like a stuck pig,
gutted and resewn, electrical wires
down to your waist, as if you, sir,
were a house of heart pine or Ocala block,

ready to be crowbarred into mini-storage.
I miss the rage that seeped through floorboards,
the attic stuffed with Chaucer, every conversation
a Grand Tour. Now you wear dark glasses

at noon, gray-eyed as Marcus Cato,
who made good bargains and died
still against Greek manners and newfangled ideas.
One of these days we must have that heart-to-heart.