

## CONCEPTUAL POEM

I love a map for its inaccuracies,  
a certain pearl for its certain pearl-ness.  
I wouldn't hurt a fly, but I'd kill one,

a way of life that keeps me asleep nights,  
as if adrift in a niche of big oil.  
Symmetry is more or less more

and less bunk—another hole, another  
doily; the phrase “be that as it may”;  
the fucking Milky Way by any other name . . .

A touch horrific is the green with which  
the ground will tear the winter. I write this  
as a florist muscles daisies into place.

## FOUND POEM

We force into meanings that don't concern us:

CORDS OF WOOD stacked all over the neighborhood;  
ARTICLES left with ex-lovers; the famous;  
AND ALWAYS the Interstate out there, like surf.

There is no point in speaking or not speaking.  
There is only a crow in a tree—make notes.

I have a wanderer's sadness at evening,

FATHER, and further—the migration of things!—  
NOT much grows here anymore, except bodies  
below the softening shales, bereft of you,

and this (forgive me) is like carrying coals.  
It's winter, it's after supper, it's goodbye—

many of the images refuse to part.

Gesticulation—it is half the language,  
the coming back from going where and touching.  
Don't you remember how free the future seemed?

Think fast! (Still dreaming?) The boy had caught his friend.  
The keyboard gone in the rank grass swept her hand.

Wanted, fought toward, dreamed of, all a green living,

each leaf would seem to require its own quatrain—  
carelessly nailed, looking like nothing at all—  
and the road twisted on to his loveless house.

Does the dust of it rise to meet you, mornings,  
the only conquered evening darlinged away?

## NINETEEN EIGHTY-THREE

Most of my parents' friends seemed dumber than mine.  
One of them, Joe, had a license plate stolen,  
and one day while jogging he happened upon  
some other poor jerk's plate laying in the road.  
Ecstatic that it shared two letters with his,  
he ran home with it and used some gaffer's tape  
to change a black number seven to an eight,  
et cetera. This in fact fooled nobody.

Not a week later, the cops pulled him over,  
fined him, informed him that they could lock him up.  
He was livid, but he was also forty,  
which to me meant he'd run half out of himself.  
I was thirteen and couldn't shake the belief  
that the world consisted mostly of police.

## PREP

To let another come as far as you  
with sunflowers, scissors, a Mason jar  
somehow, the hot sky over everything;  
the dark obligations mindfulness brings,  
those bits of invasion called “your feelings”  
in the event that they require a name—  
anything that might be love could mean shame.  
Think how power, that forever-wet wind,  
seems to come by itself quite naturally;  
how what happens now has happened thus far:  
somebody somewhere more or less saying,  
“I just called because it’s my job to call  
to make sure the man you said was dead is.”  
Daydark like a cave up here in the head,  
its core a stockpile of talkative jewels,  
I’m walking and trying to hold too much,  
a win-lose-lose-lose-lose situation.  
But what of it—what not of it, really,  
when you get right down to it, which I will  
before too long or shortly thereafter,  
while familiars come ticking through pictures.  
Mind’s its own consort, logic its own whore—  
gonna go on getting any younger.  
All day scraping my way back to the day,  
I pull myself together in a way

I wouldn't think to make a camera  
or a chimera were I to have to,  
though I do, and it's only the present,  
so I can't know when things will cease to work,  
that whiskey's cheaper just six blocks away.  
The insect-like clicks of a bicycle  
behind me are the sounds I'd expect  
from a poem or two, and so it goes . . .  
Prep for what can never be continues.