

## Fallen Empire's Tiny Chemical Sun

Timberline reached,  
I dig old snow  
to heat on a tin  
East German folding stove;  
add jasmine tea —  
Sunflower Brand,  
Fujian Province —  
to the pot; mark  
the fuel disk's origin:  
Chemische Fabrik  
Westeregeln;  
read the tea tin's  
proclamation: People's  
Republic; see far  
Seattle in smog gone  
sunset-molten;  
savor the lees.

## Discovery Park

You return from  
    summer Iceland.  
For nine weeks sun  
    in sines skimmed

lupine horizons:  
    *to see so much*  
*purple unsettles,*  
    you said, *it's*

*unnatural-natural.*  
    We climb to bluffs,  
sun slips mountains,  
    your first dark

in months, first stars,  
    first ferries silently  
crossing the sound,  
    first city rising

east—terribly  
    luminous.

## **Astral Plaint**

Lewis, long lulled on by the unearthly Pacific,  
wept to find it violent: surging to obscure the stars.

Lincoln leveled a path through unbroken forest  
for the telegraph, and no one could stop stars  
from speaking Morse. Edison was frantic

to trap the buzz of his starry head in a filament,  
then cities became constellations' mirrors.

Ford died conjuring a car that would survive  
the journey back to childhood, over whose dark fields  
Pisces still arced. Roosevelt decreed a dam

against the sky, and the Columbia swallowed  
basalt petroglyphs of human heads emitting light.

Gates ran a creek through his cavernous living room,  
flipped all of the switches and sat under dark screens,  
listening to a lone salmon spread its starry milt.

## **Domus Aurea**

Driving by Bonneville Dam's sublime  
arches at night, I remember Rome.

On the Esquiline, in view of the Coliseum,  
I asked a famous historian how it could be  
no contemporary praised Nero's vision —  
a palace overwhelming three hills  
in the capitol of the world, that became  
the world in miniature: bizarre beasts and slaves  
from every land; confounding plants; a lake  
to stage great naval battles, plays, masques;  
mosaics and frescoes so surpassing natural  
the Renaissance would lower itself  
on ropes into the ruins to steal a glimpse;  
spigots spuming floral scents; a mechanized  
ceiling of constellations rotating like the sky . . .

“He couldn't keep art separate in his mind,”  
was the answer. “Everything he touched transformed  
to simulation, and many died to make it so.  
He was hated. Except for a few descriptions —  
terse — his palace is an ellipsis.”

Above the turnout, Bonneville's floodlit arches,  
wedged between dark hills, churn the current  
into screens up and down this provincial coast.  
I see, flickering later in windows  
above The Dalles, faces before the screens —  
rapt, avid — touching the keys repeatedly  
changing their minds. There is no ceiling  
to their constellations. Their eyes:  
dots in an ellipsis.