

## Eve on the Edge

I thought it was leaves taking flight, flock of  
The last leaves, in fact, beech perhaps, they hang on  
Too long, or aspen, yellow like that, sweep and begin to  
Plunge, the last hope of the tree, taken by Thanksgiving's  
Wind, because that's the way the wind is, willful like that,  
Cruel. And they began, inevitably, to fall, ultimately and always  
To fall, to settle and dim under the rain the thunder  
Foretold. The poor scattered and gray things would be  
Indistinguishable from earth, and I thought,  
Yes, this is the way things go. I knew things  
Then, how the world worked, my legs hanging  
Over the precipice, the rock hard under me, the earth  
Carved away, nothing under my feet but wind. All things  
Pass, and dull in the passing, nothing is as bright  
For as long as the heart wants, everything  
Leaves. Every one. But I tell you, as I watched, as I  
Watched the leaves they became before my eyes:  
Goldfinch, the last of summer, rose and turned and scattered  
Like risen leaves and this was the beginning, the beginning  
Of some great migration or the last summer tale told wildly  
Flung wildly into the wind, turning over the Kaaterskill. I know  
Nothing. Nothing.

## Perseveration

I'm walking downtown under the ghost of a half moon in the day sky  
and think, I'm on a planet circled by a moon surrounded  
by other planets circled by other moons in a galaxy circling something  
and surrounded by other galaxies circling, and I'm dizzy from it,  
and wonder why we developed the consciousness to ask why  
we developed the consciousness to ask why we developed  
that consciousness, and if our brain has a center whose tendency  
is toward believing in a higher power does that disprove the existence of God,  
or prove it? So I get an ice cream cone, and why not,  
and carefully lick around the edges, a great tongue moon  
lapping the ice cream planet, a great God tongue forming the ice cream mind,  
like a thought moving around and around making sure nothing  
drips out of the cosmic cone and down the cosmic arm  
to fall on the pavement like the ghost of a half moon in the day sky.

## Root Systems

Bittersweet sucks at the apples,  
and the rest wanders  
hungry underground.  
I see it the next street  
over and the next, all  
one great growth,  
tree and fence, your house, mine.  
And water too, doesn't it  
blanket the earth, a thirsty crust,  
bonny coat all on and under?  
Won't this stream I splash through  
become the sea we cruise  
in great yachts, then muddy  
waste of Madagascar marsh,  
the turgid Sunderbans?  
And it rises to cloud to fall  
again across all time,  
so these drops once held  
the hand of a man dead  
in the bloody Ardennes,  
cupped the sturdy skin  
-boat of Saint Patrick. Oh, man,  
we're never done with  
each other and earth.  
Take my tears for your tea.  
Grind my teeth for your garden.  
Let me feed your child's child.  
Let him suck  
the bitter root sweet.

## Within Without

Oh, God, I am not the cedar roots passion-thatched  
to soil and stone.

I am no catalpa's limbs flung wide to receive.  
Not the cardinal who calls each morning, crimson  
through shattered garden and hedgerow.

I am not the thirsty earth, nor stench of rising  
swamp, its furred skunk cabbage and mud.

Not the purposeful wind. Not the elaborate trace of  
caddis fly larva splayed on mica-sparked rock.

God, if I am you, we are less than feather.

We are wanton. Flotsam.

We are the laceless lost shoe, a broken comb, the crumpled  
note on the grassy verge.

We are gutter mash. Chaff.

God, if you are me, we are lost. We have forgotten  
what we're here for.

God, if we are one, who will I ask?

## A Matter of Spirit and Flesh

I read it as “a matter of spirit and  
*fish*,” and think, yes,  
spirit is undulant, pulled  
by the moon’s moods,  
a body’s impulse,  
at once vast and intimate  
as a hand under a blouse.

And we’re helpless,  
lifted and taken, our flesh  
held in it and its breath  
ours, its plunge  
our terror, the way  
its scales splinter light  
our erratic dance, as if

we were finned, as if  
in this medium, nothing  
is without grace.