

We Need So Many Names for Rain

Not just water from Sierra thunderheads

but the full, hard rain
washing stench from city streets

Out-of-season rain ruining the wedding day
and the long-awaited outing

Droplets that hang midair in a tentative sun

The sudden downpour that brings us together
under convenient eaves

The gladdening all-night pounding
that lifts the salmon returning
to their creeks

The implacable rain that seeks out the smallest fissures
finds the loose attic board
and enters like a thief

Steady rain to set the newly planted bulbs

Torrents that swell the rivers
wrenching and destructive

The windy rain we walk in defiance of

The ricochet rhythms

of hail on the skylight

spring thunder and lightning

And best,

the rain that arrives

after long absence

to open the earth

Lost Child Among the Blueberries

Secrets are hidden
in the small berries in the bushes.
The girl knows the dark berries
and the secrets they contain.

Alone with her aluminum cup
she gathers them, tells the stories
of the secrets and their sadness,

remembers the anger
and what breaks when
the rages begin.

The red leaves among the green
she imagines as all she wants
and cannot have. She plucks
and puts them in the cup.

She will fill the cup
again and again, scattering
the torn leaves at day's end.

We don't know how
to take her back, lead her
by another hand, let her begin again
in kindness.

Entomology

Did you ever hear them called “Jesus bugs?”
he asked.

I know them by another name,
water striders, the insects that scatter
at lake’s edge, just where you enter.

Insects so benign you don’t think twice,
plunging in head first, but slower,
more mindfully, because of them.

Just slipping past
at this small intersection, only
for a moment.

This is all they know, and you, swimmer—
drying off, moving on—leave in their care
this quiet corner of the lake.

“*Jesus bugs*,” as if a small piece of divinity
embraced them. Science wants to know
how they stay afloat.

To find out,
return to the water’s edge,
these quiet places, and with faith,
a small, insect faith,

step out.

Winter Moon Knocking

after Andrew Wyeth's Moon Madness

Without regard for the fragility
of our walls or windows,

the moon arrives with its urgency,
flooding our rooms

with its stricken light: *Time!*
Time is cycling by!

Every moon comes
with the same warning,

swelling the sea tides
sweeping into the bay,

knocking and knocking
at our brittle doors.

The Egress

after P. T. Barnum

Here in our element among the throngs,
all the lights and the noise: three rings
and a cannon, the pop-up bouquets
 proffered by clowns—

All day taking in the aerial flights,
the strangest of beasts, never tired of
applauding the elephants,
 taunting the lion—

Room after room, we follow along,
jostled and jostling, dancing to Beatles
and Bruce, Motown,
 Hendrix, and more—

We've been here so long, we know
every corner, avoid the fun house
with its mirrors
 and aging reflections—

Here's a new sign: THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS—
Flushed with the heat, the flow of the crowd,
we're leading the way to see
 the Egress!

And silence.
Stars in a cold sky,
fog blowing in.

Lovers move past us,
stroll away.

Why are we suddenly
on the other side of the door?

Seduction

The blackberries have stopped you, and
in spite of yourself,
you will walk no farther tonight.

Instead, with nothing more than the palm
of your hand, you give in,
cupping the soft fruit in one hand,

reaching into the tangle
with the other, snagging a sleeve,
scratching a wrist.

Don't worry. You will not be here long.
Before you know it, this
will be years past.

Your knees will nag, and the hill
will be too steep.
The evening chill uninviting.

No, the inconvenient succulence
of this event comes only once
and only now.

Left

Sun up
hat on
coat on
camera bag
 tight on his hip
door slam
he's left.

 Left me the coffee
the extra hour of sleep
the early morning
before the sun climbs
down to the window.

And he's what I've got left.
Gone mother and father
Children grown
 and off
Gone friend after friend.

But he—
oh thank goodness—
he's left.