

A Fine Delirium

I

Walnut and vanilla, anise and orange,
raspberry and white chocolate—
this morning's sweet-cream breeze
extends its deft hand and squeezes hard,
blows in a fine delirium, pressing sailboats
and clouds, dissolving in cool clear water.
A bird's nest stitched together with cotton
and string, twigs and leaves, withstands
the wind's bare-knuckle bullying,
its teasing and taunting. Dragonfly throng,
an hourglass menace, mapping a path
via bristly cadences of oriole and cardinal.
Knight and Bishop have made their move,
their pawns are aligned to create a barrier.
Is this what's meant by the terms
hurl or *entangle* when time stands down
landscapes of lichen-smothered rock?
Jester, prankster—spring's heat-blur writes
its book, each page hand-lettered in signs.
An unmarked road leads to a by-the-wayside
beachfront, its burning tar and gravel welling
up near invisible tracks. The hill ahead
divides space like stone—first there's a sense
of rising, then a headlong tumbling into the void.

II

Apricot and lime, pineapple and grapefruit,
lemon and blueberry—the ground skulks
catlike, a wetland's lethal purring.
A mirage cauterizes the blond marsh grass,
rims our lawn's well-manicured emerald.
Rebirth, a plunge into fierce water;
the past, a migrating bird. Chanted psalms

sung by children have seized my sleeve
like a late realization. King and Queen,
hypnotized by wildflowers, carry off
in secret the gossamer gauze of daylight,
a butter-crock's churning, whisked frothy.
Here, under cool leaves, we rewrite sentences
like scripture, scribbled excerpts lit
by moonlight. Fountains sprinkle water
to make one's eyes blink. A river's stirring
keeps to itself its counterclockwise whirl.
And one's nerves divide exponentially,
the end result of years locked in a fixed position.
How might summer's glow give meaning
to the terms *hurtle* and *shout* when heron
and egret drift by on clouds? A jet trail carves
its initials high up as we walk past front lawns,
brittle and yellow, withered as parchment.

III

Watercress and shellfish, cilantro and avocado,
mint and fig—it's raining and the angels
chiseled in stone throughout the walled-in
garden are getting wet. This mansion, once
the place of fables and fairytales, now holds
empty gazebos and gables—and shadows
from ghostly-grey leaves hanging down
from rows of ancient pine. The past,
a wraith-like figure dressed in black,
walks these lawns with us, and we can
sense her presence with each step.
Hidden rooms, secret corners—perspectives
riffle through tree leaves, sculptured
wood logs rotted soft with moss.
A Rook captures the autumn chill
with its opening move. Drenched, disheveled,
a vagabond elegance. What twist of syntax
defines the meaning of the terms *hurt*
and *care* when the afternoon mist lingers
longer simply because the ground swells

absorb rain as if to cast a spell? An unlikeness
recast, wings, stone-cut in bas-relief,
lift wolves and peacocks, gargoyles and chariots,
poised to fly away, calling out names.

IV

Goat cheese and truffles, ginger and egg,
black pudding and pork—night arrives early,
and the leafless maple-birch-oak-cottonwood
are peppered with snow, a hand-drawn
watercolor blurry with splotches of grey
and white pearl. The country's flat line spikes
when it matters, switching to *off* a blizzard's
muzzle-lashing cold. Nail-scraper, night-crow—
fissures of tissue rupture both earth and skin.
Wherefore unaware, danger dares to rise,
rises to scatter and coalesce. Earth's facial
profile—its oblique references to *hurry*
and *redefine*—can be interpreted
as a form of mind-reading, as a thought-form
made manifest with each exhaled breath.
A Pawn moves a space forward, is captured.
Clash and clangor from winter's giant eyelash,
its pupil grown dark. Wire fence, dead trees,
flat sky, frozen ashes from a cold summer fire—
our footmarks press snow to the shape of clouds.
A highway a mile away gives off the sound
of an engine firing. When we move in to hear,
we can sense the presence of horses and children,
of wind, and of unquiet flocks stirred to flight.