

Shadows Shortening

I.

There is a self departing.
I met her last June.
I have enjoyed her stay,
It is a heavy stone.
The new girl is at my door,
I saw her approaching.

There is a desert in this wake.
I am driving through.
There is no time or place here.
When my eyes close the hills turn to bodies.
I head toward enormous legs. They close around me.
The afternoon draped over canyon statues.

An audience of mouths
Enjoying themselves,
Garden of Narcissus.
To my left, heads of poppies turned toward me.
To my right, the slain fig buds.

Will you promise to stay, unknowable her?
What's in a promise from one who has gone?

II.

Would you believe these shapes can change?
The rocks are starting to sing.
They change into faces with tongues and teeth
I stare, they stop, I glance, they start again:

Change to an oak, a sow, a pile of dung
Field of clover, mulberry, woven silk carpet
Still in that carpet an outline of oak
Reaching for ground again.

I ask the approaching girl:
Can you see this too?
The tongues, the teeth, the oak, the sow,
The carpet reaching for ground?

Well, sure, she says,
But you know it's all statistical.

III.

In the southwest,
Sky stretches to sky,
They are raising a monument
To something or another.
Blabbering of a thousand larks

Like a wedding veil stretched over my eyes
The betrothal to tomorrow has begun.
I thought I saw her return, but she fell away
She is probably in the hills by now
Rails pointed sunward
Waiting for the train to come

She was wrong, the girl who left.
There is a wanted self who cannot return.
She is right but cannot speak.
The sun changes everything.
An inverted image lingers

Long after I've closed my eyes
There is water like a hand
The shadows shortening