

Four Contracting Sentences and Two Scenes that Won't Comply

I

That day on the farm with the peach
big as a hambone stripped down
to marrow and flavor,
the little heres-and-theres aunt Gertrude adds
that make all the difference,
get lost in the process
of moving out and moving on,
go down as
the missing ingredients
of a tradition that, if we close our eyes
and allow the drift, we can still taste,
maybe even identify
if we catch memory off its guard.

II

The potentials in our natures
we've yet to activate
saying don't forget we're here
while you're busy with other
lovers whose promises
sound more enticing
than our meager requests for work,
work and hints at an eventual payoff that,
if you're lucky,
you won't be too old and decrepit to enjoy.

III

Always less and more than what came before,
less than the woman
who of herself produced us,
more than the history whose landscape
spreads out beneath our feet,

our travels the newest points
of its ever-expanding universe,
pigeon-toed, pecking at seed, gamey.

IV

Body revolving around body,
keeping their distance and keeping the order,
coming together and upsetting the balance
and we can't have that now can we?

V

Across the way on a window ledge,
pigeons interlock beaks
and bob their heads up and down.

Have you ever seen two birds kiss?

He jumps on her back and quickly jumps off.
She casts him a look and flies away.
Something wasn't working,
an octave above and an octave below our hearing,
he alone and I alone,
the music not meant for mortal ears.

VI

Their siblings who live in my wall
won't stop cooing
and I'd break their necks if I could.
It's been that kind of day. Syntax, hungover,
unfriendly, refuses to give an inch
so you want to rub it out
and lounge in the space it leaves behind.

Then a walk out in the after-rain
and seeing one drink from a dirty curbside puddle,
I'm so touched in the heart
I raise my hand to check for the shaft of an arrow.

No shaft, no arrow, I can only hope
the heart it didn't pierce wasn't all in my head.