

A HUMMINGBIRD

At Nora's first post-divorce Labor Day bash
there's a fluster and a fuss and a fidget
in the fuchsia bells. "Two fingers of sour mash,
a maraschino cherry." "So the digit's
still a unit of measurement?" "While midgets
continue to demand a slice of the cake."
"A vibrator, you know, *that* kind of widget."
Now a ruby-throated hummingbird remakes
itself as it rolls on through mid-forest brake.
"I'm guessing she's had a neck lift *and* lipo."
"You know I still can't help but think of the *Wake*
as the apogee, you know, of the typo."
Like an engine rolling on after a crash,
long after whatever it was made a splash.

A SECOND HUMMINGBIRD

Yet another money man
with a finger in the till
at Flavor & Fragrance, my own
not standing still

no less a stance
than his, the only grounds
for his existence
now being to make such rounds

and roundelays as mine, to touch
what I've come to see
as the raw nerve

in each of us, each
doomed to think himself ever so
slightly behind some curve.

ANOTHER PORCUPINE

Looking for all the world like smoke starting up from a skillet
and leaving in a huff
while hefty enough
to drag her pillow filled with buckwheat and millet
from the Dumpster behind the Five-and-Dime,
another porcupine would tough

it out from the industrial quarter
by way of a six-foot drop
to the redemption bay of the Co-op
where she did double duty as a can and bottle sorter.
Soda lime . . . Aluminum . . . Soda lime . . .
Looking for all the world like the last prop

that had kept my car's low-beam tunnel
from falling about my head
she dragged me after her, in dread,
to where she'd funnel
herself into a parking lot. I imagined her climb
through the window of a shed

in search of an odd work glove, a sandal,
any haft or helve remotely worth its salt,
choosing to exalt

over the pristine a sweat-cured handle
clearly past its prime,
favoring any with which I'd long since have found fault

and consigned to the midden
alongside everything else that had managed to fail.
The parking lot was now less track than mountain trail
through which I followed her, unbidden,
towards the sublime
of a snowcapped newspaper bale

that lay not in *Recycling* but the bin marked *Waste Matter*,
there to be broken down and burned.
Like so many who've yearned
to find a pattern in the blood spatter
at the scene of a crime,
spurred on as we are by the very thing we've spurned,

this porcupine seemed set to plummet
towards every barb we've hurled—
seeking out through the low cloud that swirled
about the summit
only a plot marked by a spade shaft, its ingrained grease and grime,
where once she'd gone looking for all the world.