

## Am I Astonished?

What I mean when I say *I don't know*  
is that nothing will stick to me now, all  
the history has stuck and stuck and stuck,  
I mean there's a *want* in knowing, there's  
pending and penance in *don't*, I mean to say

I remember bees and a fortress of ants,  
holding a vinyl record slippery shine  
and petroleum scent, diamond glint  
reflected in my iris, how I learned  
my lettering precisely between the lines  
and the lower case halfway up so much  
to learn, all the words that rhymed with *fin*,  
counting on fingers and by heart, *lost*  
and *found*, universes melodic or fretful

What I mean to say is  
I can rip my voice through carbon dust,  
arrive at the wrong desert, wonder where  
pretty goes when the world ends, ask  
*will* the world end in shoes and dalliances  
as I twist myself in the direction of a kiss?

## **Corn Hill**

It was the same day you set fire to the dunes who knew that sand could burn so brightly but never char the hollowed-out houses stood still except when you turned around to watch their flat brown caps lifted wishing away the tumble down of round green begging the jagged handprint to hold back what remained of sway you yourself matching tilt to silt of red earth spilling twilight never promised you never promised that stripe of corrugated clouds would bleed yellow into blue that day or even forever.

*(Inspired by Edward Hopper, "Corn Hill")*

## **In the Blue Lake the Moon is Coming Close\***

When does evening end and night begin? I was planning to tell my stories about the middle of the night but then realized that I could not say when that would be, *the middle*. Like, *I rose in the middle of the night unable to wake or breathe* – would you understand me to mean midnight, or three a.m., or when the blue night has turned black enough for hint of stars? But what about those nights that are moonless yet never black, even long after sunset and long before dawn, when I can still see white clouds in the sky – and why is that? I might know such things had I been paying attention, all this time, all this long while no attention paid except to the two thousand views of the lake, each one new, as though hour by hour my eyes were no longer my own, or if, perhaps, I were to say, *I was consumed in the middle of the night and the cool of your hand could not still me* – would you know where fire ends and cool begins?

*\*Title from “Night on the Great River,” Meng Hao-jan, translation by WC Williams*