

## THE DEAREST FRESHNESS

You walked unknowing and once put down your heel  
too hard on the dry white ground among the brittle  
stems of joe pye weed: it broke through the crust

you hadn't known was a crust, and a red goo  
seeped upward, filling your shoe, and cracks extended  
from the breach you'd made: narrow fissures showing

maroon within, like blood in a complex cut,  
badly washed. You raised your cursing head then  
to the long chain link fence topped with barbed wire

and the mill beyond. The gentle violet weed  
that lived there looked with you. The flower that sucks up poison  
and presents it lavender to the bee and your eye.

But you're no flower, you're only human. You know  
and have to know what it feeds on, what can't be seen  
in the lovely look and the insouciant surviving.

Was this field pure once? Was it ever not this void  
that impossibly, though void, is excremental,  
and shines and bows gold in the sun, scented with clover

as you stare across to the house unpainted for decades  
over by the highway, its glassless upper window  
with a curtain swaying? The field was the pure site of sin once.

But now those two sinners never were, nor the world they fouled.  
Purity now is just the dregs of an empty origin  
remaining in unadulterated traces. A weed's

appearance, unbothered, beautiful, eating from  
some old explosion, the dry crust of a sea of paint.  
If you want what purity is, the perpetual instantaneous

return to the ground of a possible world, you'll have to  
desert the word and thought of this day. And think.  
We can only think what we have words for, but think

what you don't have words for. Think. What you don't  
have any words for... When you were a child, someone  
called you apart from your name. You've been that naked,  
that desired. It has been, it is, it can be, you know it,  
you have known it. You'll have to desert this subversion  
of roots and birds that is what we have, we are,