Bestiary

Each letter has an animal self, a dreamscape’s sound surge of scale and claw purged in a moment’s bright breath of hiss or thunder. Its flutter borne from umber and burnt sienna, bone crush and manganese blown around a hand on a rock face, just where the voice reverberates its syllabic dance in wrist flick and moan, urging forth the herd or causing rain to cross the plain in a purpling bruise. This, the opening in the monoglot of tongue, something to listen for something to lock in, lift and remember. This faint blue hued by light across an expectant eye, a crimson whisper in a breath where each detail of nuthatch or katydid, skink or smoke haze begins its slow fade towards extinction.

This is what’s frayed here found among strung beads of jasper, tourmaline, a Nassarius shell smudged in red ochre, a final act spoken; a totem dreamed forth in cut amber caught, microbe by microbe, in silence becoming mind.
Lazarus Rising

Past the light, the stretch of trees that leads
to his house, past the doorway to the room his sisters keep alive with their incense of tears, he comes
like a crow eyeing these shiny emblems of his life.

In shadows three days, he watches
his sisters drifting in rooms as if upon water
till on that third day they are almost transparent, flat, something he can put his hand through.

By the fourth day, it is uninhabitable:
he cannot remember why he has come or why
light hurts his skin so, or what the settling of dark birds mean.

Motes move through him but not God. Evening bleeds
to the horizon, women’s voices move around him—
an insistent sirocco that will not cease.

A man wearing white comes then leaves again—
his hand burns, the light burns... something he has known, a distant whisper... passing the branches the stone by the tomb’s door... a luminescence.

When he awakens from that second sleep bandaged in what he could remember, a dream of falling in which the air itself had become a seam of light, an insect humming close that would not leave,

he first heard the voice of God an indecipherable whisper, over and over in his ear.
Burrowing

What burrows becomes us. The mole, the mouse, the worm
digging into this moist obscurity of body
turning
deeper and away
by what the light reveals.

Sun-cast shadow
beneath the fray of roots or fear
of adder’s fang,
I reach what’s buried there, white and fertile
from this rock-clotted earth

where what’s dark brings forth
scent or feel or the thing itself.

Each meaning is
a harbinger of what’s to come. This bulb,

perhaps, is how the past’s exposed
in the understory of a crumbling dark, a bitter
taste on the tongue,
illuminating the body
nuanced and particular, something felt forward
and unencumbered in its blooming.

This is what we might remember of dying
or what the dying might finally taste of living
a scent remembered though invisible
from what’s given up in a darkened room.