

where we took coffee on a sweltering morning
yet in Iowa, a fan failing at our feet.
It was a sign, not of betrayal either.
That yellow breast of hers looked cool
and the white bars on her black wings
returned to us the formal in weather
without shape, shimmery. So a goldfinch.
The mind is a wonder, is my summary.

The Way I Live Now / Naomi Lazard

I know these shadows well,
the darkest corners are familiar.
The bit of light through the blind,
the scent of pomander; this
is my bedroom. You are with me.

I am making a statue of you
out of your own body, commemorating
the precise feeling of the surface
of your skin, your head turning,
the shape of your thighs, your
back and shoulders. Your flesh
keeps dissolving under my hands;
it is striving toward memory,
toward completion which I cannot
reach. I keep forming you again,
out of your own substance, elusive
as the crucial fragment
in a half remembered dream.
The role you play in the process
is as active as mine, you
are straining upward with the effort
to experience your creation.
This is the way you will burst out
of yourself; you never do this.
It is my constant failure.

Your face is most difficult,
the head is extremely hard to get.
Already your face is not the one
I remember. My own fingers confuse me
as I trace the curve of your forehead.
Your eyes confound me. They fly away
as I touch them.

My bed is breaking
with the weight of this problem.
I am lying on splinters.
I want you to know that all this
means something. It is my life's work.

Old Records / William Matthews

Les shows me his new Braun
tape deck. "After I've played them
three or four times I can hear records
begin to grind down. Now I play
them once, to tape." He's got a wall
of them, uncirculated coins.
Things go by, the summer draining
into the fall, breweries consolidate,
there's a golf course where the woods
were. We're like a fire
and save things from ourselves.
Furtwangler's too fast fourth movement
that I love, Coltrane breaking
his breath in the hissing rapids,
Janis in heat, Janis in scratch,
Bjoerling's beautiful voice
ruined by whisky—
fuzz on the ripe notes and fuzz
continuing to grow.