

Jack Frost Sugar Refinery

Outside the abandoned sugar refinery,
beyond the mice and the oxidized canisters,
at the whitened mouth of a large gravel parking lot
dissected by five orange cones,
I stand the thought of turning,
hatless, awkward, all January afternoon,
all night through dreams of loosened planks,
the mosquito's blood of horses,
to a place I don't own, nor know by heart
one cardinal's width of, just to save
some men whose own good children quit and left
them there to be survived by tar.

The Court Poets of Philadelphia put an end
each dawn to the stillness of radiators
set out with the trash. Tank drunks,
on their fastidious way to sleep in the fields,
they falsify their dialect, whittling
miniature liberty bells out of their thighs.
By evening, they believe in the moon.
They believe if the Hill Street Shoe Repair shop
had been theirs from the beginning, the bulbous raccoon
would have a ring on each thumb.

The impractical lot to the north, unsold,
embarrasses an elkhound loping among the stacks
of dampened cardboard. In gospel frankness,
it embarrasses only me, with its mysterious shopping carts
and far too adequate drainage. The repainted freight cars,
somer as tea bags, begin again to green.
All this time toward my father, I have stood
with a glistening blackberry between the index
and thumb finger of my numb left hand.

Glorious refinery, doomed to your own useless plumbing,
you must stand me one favor for the spaces
I have hidden you in my lungs.
Before the local artists indent your smokestacks
as they never stood, or the governor dedicates
your wreckage to our children's defense fund,
or the university archaeologist delivers
his humorous eulogy for your beams,
please become dark. Please go out as anonymously
as a toddler's nightlight after ten in Indiana.
I can offer no tulips, no captions or enlightened epitaphs,
but please, good thing, stop shining.