Now comes the reckoning. Comes the flame.
Old wineskins still hold their slosh.
Barbpoints of fenceslats, pickets: that’s the pale; I would not counsel going beyond. It’s enough here. Each step away squeezes a little more of the green out of things, off of lawns. What use so many blessings if we must spend all our days counting and reckoning, reckoning and counting them up? Pearls in the trough, in the slop, caught in the fleshy pink nostrils of swine: waste not. There’s an eve — have you seen it — swaddled inside never, warning-time of the coming-at-dawn of what travels here so fast, the ill and pestilential wind. But we can go backwards, it’s better so, so late’s earlier than early, and the eve comes after its feast-day. Sometimes the subject goes away when you say it. It goes with the saying. I did just as my mother said. Watched her say just what she did not do. But her doing, her vodka-guzzling, to speak of it was to go with her going. I did not say what she did and saw her never again. Enough said. Any enough is too much with what can be made into a noose. Just a few inches of old raveled rope in the backyard and before you know it some legs will kick and swing. Gone is as gone does. Enough is enough of a feast? Tell that to the twice-lightning-stricken. Still comes the reckoning, still comes the flame. The scars
burns leave on water
are known as sizzle and steam. Twice-shy. The truth will out
like the drenched fire, hide itself
as flame does deep in a woodcoal, but the water keeps something
cinderblacked it won’t ever get rid of.
Every question’s two-sided, like a fence:
picket-snaggled, built-to-obscure. The out
side’s the straggling answer, the devil-
taken hindmost: unhomely, uneasily
beyond the pale. Every day inside we set the table for enough
and make of it a feast, call the moments
cast pearls. But still comes not-yet. Meet it halfway
on the road out of here where trouble always approaches, deep
in the refulgent, eye-burning greenness of the other side.
Just east of east, where west already lies
when you look back
and let the bygones surrender themselves and be
what they always meant to be: vanished or vanishing,
like the pale pearlgray ashclumps that last night were whitehot
wormholes through coal. The present’s not
a time; it’s no place, like a home, like our stone-
pummeled glass house, the browning
jewelweed-grass smearing its way up the panes.
The present’s the hectic leap
of fleas without their dog. Nips at nothing.
It’s soon, now. It will soon be now. The reckoning will come
later, as late as never. But for now the tense stays present
like a hummingbird caught in your hand, nectar-tongued,
its heartbeat splintering each second into twentieths.
Now is the time. Here is the set lawn. The pales aim their spiked
pickets over our paling-out and lushly-only green.