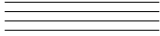


T H E S A L T L I C K



S C O T T H I G H T O W E R

Now a large tumultuous family
that is more village than country
rents the house. I now am the landlord
of the landscape of my childhood.
Last one standing. The tontine is mine.
Not without pretenders and dispute.

A ways from the main gate, in front
of the house, off to the side of the approach
road, just as one comes up the hill
where the wild bronze turkeys
like to patrol, especially on rainy days,
near the antique oak with snake-like limbs
that drop to the ground – and curl back up
in search of Laocoön and his sons,
is the site of the ancient salt lick;
even less assuming than the old
rock reservoir, the weathered barn,
the house tucked among ancient oaks.

Even before my family became its stewards,
the common practice was to put out
salt to supplement (the natural supply long
depleted) for the wildlife and livestock.
Eventually, we built a water trough.
“Come, eat. Come, drink.”

In the light of each morning, and then
throughout the day, the cows amble up
and drink their bellies full. Their muzzles

drip with slobber, the green of grass
and moss, and water. Dark turkeys
sometimes approach when the cattle
are not there. Late at night, the varmints
come and drink. If it is a dark
night, their eyes betray

them. If it is a bright star-lit night,
their silhouettes portray
them. And in the hours
between night and morning,
the deer come, lick salt, and drink.