

*Apex Obscura*

*Van Patton Bridge, Woodruff, SC*

We climbed the tapered bracing  
of weathered steel chords and struts  
found footholds in u-turned trusses  
seasoned with the stress of coal trains  
crossing the piedmont's echo of annual rain.

With timid steps beyond the parapets  
we flung ourselves from the triangles  
that bridged the slouching river's banks  
for weightless tumult past stringers  
and the deck sank before us.

Wingless pivot from the apex obscured  
the self-evident slope of hermetic pleasure.  
Rising to the surface sears the lungs  
in the limit of what we may call beautiful,  
just as labor contains the critique of labor.

What we have done is what we will become.  
Mortality has the seed of its replacement,  
attention without regret, still.  
The soul may not be found in autopsy,  
but it has no place to go down but up.

*The Scarecrow*

Sunlight scatters in place  
of what was a road, which  
like the rows beside it  
harrowed from the dirt,  
held tight the shape of desire  
to make the land a means,  
each row less formed  
until the last dark shape  
lessens into light cast wide  
by fog.

In one of the rows stands a man,  
stuffed and still. One must be  
still to see the scarecrow,  
to wait for heat and wind to part  
water suspended in cumulus.

Though fog breaks  
morning's promise  
of field mice and hare  
to the northern harrier,  
discloses winter's debt  
in green shoots brighter  
than the sun itself,  
and holds itself to the thought  
there is no consequence,  
there is only permission,  
the fog is not a reason  
to think the scarecrow  
minds the fog,  
it is only a straw man.