

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.