

BANANGO
EDITIONS

1



REGULATION GHOST

WESTON CUTTER

Regulation Ghost

by Weston Cutter

Released July 2015
BE 01

Cover: Victorio Marasigan
Text copyright © Weston Cutter

banangoeditions.tumblr.com

I

[basement mornings].....	6
Muddy Hymnal.....	7
Lament in B.....	9
What We Did To Our Wives.....	11
So Much Dependent.....	12
Standard Practice.....	13
Spring Prayer.....	14

II

Believe The Fluttering.....	16
Augury.....	17
Status Update.....	19
Framework.....	21
Close Up.....	23
Fareway Metaphysics.....	25
Water over Water.....	27

III

After We Were Monkeys but Before We Became Fish Again.....	31
Here Here.....	32
Outside/A/War.....	33
Beefeater Drowns.....	35
Behind is a Relative Term.....	37
Seasonal Gamble.....	39
St. Alban.....	40

I was lonely but I was having fun.
—Timothy Showalter, “Goshen ‘97”

I

[basement mornings]

Basement mornings, layers of caked
blue out the garden windows, the last
slivers of frost clinging before the hours
rush forward + suddenly it will be June : from here

I exhume the past because I know
shovel songs best, know all the words : and
even if what's behind any of us is nothing
much more than flickering reels : and
even if it all meant nothing—how Cara
sat waiting for me to kiss her, how I
sat waiting for her to tell me to kiss her, how
some deeper aspect of me was that night
cast in the heart's iron—the nothing
remains + is what I wake to, tongue

wordless and dry : what stays
forever constant, what obtains
is the waiting for some clue
or sign : how I walked, New

Year's Eve day, all over Madrid, sure
I'd be able to, in that foreign chorus
of tongues, pick some trick from out
the dry, orange-tanged air + say *that's*
it : sure I'd recognize whatever I then
believed I'd need for the next year : pre

tend life's binary : you are where
ever you are + I am in my basement trying
to convert the specific nothing I wake
remembering into some something
for you to chew : this is the gum of
how we do or do not get along : you too
know some song best : your hands
fit certain tools + the work—however
small, however deep into nothing
it takes any of us—will have to do.

Muddy Hymnal

and the photos I don't have
of women I kissed and places I left
before I knew where to say I was : the
half life of rot : somewhere there's
a picture of V staring into the camera
wearing next to nothing : this picture :
I was then elbows-deep daily in bike-grease
+ convinced proximity to the machinery
of movement would ease the ache of
stasis : there's always more that needs
doing : this picture she sent
wrapped in purple underwear : soft
+ heady as the way one in winter
imagines lilacs will smell mid-May : this
picture : girl in purple underwear, her
body frictionless because the liquidity
of youth, how she cocked out her hip
ditto her chin, haughty
the way only those who've lived inside
a great beauty's chorus can be : + me : that
she chose blah-faced
smoke-hungry forgettable me : : : how
her lips parted in the photo, the length
of her back reflected in the mirror
behind her : everything : every : thing : she
sent two prints : *just in case ha ha* : I carried
one, kept it pocketed as I pulled
broken spokes recabled brakes trued wheels : I
snuck looks at it on smoke breaks : this
was that long ago, when standing next to
a dumpster's stink smoking was among
the day's best moments : *she's looking at me*
I'd believe, my head light with breathlessness
+ faith : *right at me* : I told myself to believe
which meant I never would : : later she

said *I thought I'd spend my life thinking every camera*
was your face : more at home with her desire than I
could possibly have then been : with mine :
she must have been even more beautiful than
I recall : as perhaps was I : as perhaps is any
river one either jumps too much or not enough in to :

Lament in B

I'd prefer the world not melt but I like
drying my hands on disposable
towels instead of within the windy grip
of forced air
and so today's compromise is no different
from yesterday's, tomorrow's:
fire or water: eventually all will be dry,
each pore + sea
-shore, the very wettest kiss. Outside it's
sunny, trace of wind and
the mountains surrounding this town either
repel clouds or trap
+ hold them, pillows over the valley's face,
there seems no in-between
though I've only been here two weeks so
this town's just
one more map-speck I know barely, by name
and how cheap local beer is, by
how clouds do or do not pass by. I know
the route in + away,
though what I know most intensely are
the minutes, the gathering clicks, how
in each I'd rather, under different clouds in
different cities,
be kissing a woman far from here, away from
weather-manipulating mountains
and considerations of wet hands + burning.
What's strange
is to fall in love sure everything will dry, sure
the world cannot last, that
no matter what I do with my hands perhaps
even now a burn's
already somewhere begun. A cloud scuzzes
the sun and dark momentarily wins:
it's simple to not bother drying my hands, walk

the dark hallway into lit day
ready to wetly touch the green + temporary
+ stirring world. The cloud passes, re-
revealing what's been above. And the kiss she
and I will kiss when our lips are
re-revealed will be both wet and made of fire—

What We Did To Our Wives

when we were young was
invent them. Conflagrations of desire cobbled
from billboard dreams +
whispers. Discussed how we'd suck their blood
or whatever was necessary
to taste them. Searched through tall grass + snow,
the slow-rolling water of
our hearts' rivers. Years without + every song
we sang about waiting. Now
we've got wives, hopes that have taken names, wide
hips, our money, nervous
tics when we drive too fast, beauties who've seen
too closely into a dark
we somehow for so long believed was our own.

So Much Dependent

So much dependent : empty
clothes pin, bird feeder near
bankrupt of seeds : the rain gauge
hasn't been licked or kissed
in weeks and two crows yesterday
wrestled through flight : against
each other with nothing to push
against but air: gravity: mass
times acceleration is the measurement
of force, but implicit, underneath
the numbers like an imagined
monster at bedtime, fourth grade,
is *against*: the rock not simply
stepped on but lept from, the way
that to escape this town and these roads
I have to push off over and over
from this town and these dim, narrow roads:
and even a song, pushing against
silence: the reaching hand motivated
by the emptiness it's grounded in:
there is no rhyme without something
first dischordant—*stone* against
hunger, mine against *yours* : believe
if you wish on purity, uncluttered
and individual hopes : against+
among the rabble that's deeper is
where what's most ached for takes root.

Standard Practice

Everyone seems hungry therefore ankles as chickenwings,
from what would you make a meal given recollection
of the color yellow, the sound of a sheet
snapped cleanly open and to determine the half-life
of an uncreased anything multiply
half the day's pressure by the dog always lying down,
claiming all the goddamn area
for the sake of some good licks, the dog's
constant goddamn barking at the neighbors divided by
a scotch at 6pm, evenings of Seagram's
and Sony, of celery cut + stored in plastic in the fridge but
the bag of chips (like a wallet instead of your heart) takes
less effort to pry open, less stooping to, do you want to have to
admit so much of life's just what's *easiest*, what's there?
Hence *convenience store* instead of *gas station* and frustration's simpler
to run-up like a gambler's debt than gratitude, like thanks
for this timpanic tummy growl, the fact that the difference
between my stomach and art is the manner in which desire
is expressed. Splotch of azure, anarchy of pinstripes, what I keep
wanting to ask is what
we called it right before we knew to say *regret*.

Spring Prayer

Next door the cat's finally quiet, fed, the mewling suppressed for another day and on the way out into another spring night I hear stereos from the next several apartments and a woman's voice laughing, no, crying, no, there's music where you least expect: I could've killed that cat yesterday, bawling like a fucking newborn while the water was boiling and the coffee still in separate stages, grounds on one side/ water on the other, like stages of grief as described in a book for Dummies, first denial then anger, it's not ever how it feels but this is how I've come to April, thinking as always of an old name I keep remembering so I can forget it anew, she's laughing now, I think, a TV on in the background and the windows in the church across the street were all removed and replaced over a month in winter + one night after work was finished I crept up and licked each pane of glass where new window met old wood, licked like to seal an envelope, like to secure the new view and if, instead of going to see a friend who may never ask me what I really want, I could stand in there now with the pipeorgan quiet and looming behind me + all I know of God reverent in the curved, shining woodwork above I'd ask not for song or silence but for a way to know each from each, real woman's voice from false, light of two candles from one flickering bulb, feel of sleep from feel of falling to sleep, the name D__ from the word denial, *go away* from *don't fade*, holy from April, April from the word *almost*, etc., amen—

II

Believe The Fluttering

17th night. December. I'm driving past the bar I got drunk at last night, past the one I'll drink in tomorrow, but tonight— tonight I'm driving to a quiet house in which waits a woman in whom there's a heart on which, I hope, my name is written.

There's a man on the side of the road in front of the church building a home for Jesus: he pulls hay from a big black plastic bag and spreads it around. Behind him are three sheep and a cow, all plastic, leaning against each other, leaning against a tree. At

the bar last night her eyes were fluttering and, for a moment, in all the noise, toward the end of the night, I could believe the fluttering was for me. Big handfuls of hay he tosses around— there, there—because salvation must appear random. We read

at any hour but then prepare every minute, every second. Each fluttering eye. I'm five minutes from her house. I'm waiting for a green light. I'm waiting for the man to set the rest of the scene, for all the characters to be in place aside from the lead; for him

to turn and see me watching, each of us waiting. A car honks and I pull ahead and notice a box marked *Mary+Joseph+JC* lying off to the side of the stable in which lies the unfilled manger, into which the faithful convince themselves a miracle will, again,

be delivered. In her driveway I sit in my silent truck and I'm almost sure she'll have the door open for me before I knock. We believe for the same reason we wait: because we must. In front of her door, before I knock, I swear I can hear her coming for me.

Augury

The grill kicks an orange hole in the season,
a spear into ribs,
a thief in aisle eleven: I've laid hands on those
massive midwest drills
+ imagined twisting one into a frozen lake til
water quit its solid
seasonal stubbornness to reveal blinking life
beneath, living stuff
which knows more ways to live with ice than I.
What I know
involves occasional cocoa, salt on the side
walk, recalled or fore
told equatorial stories, Costa Rica or warmer. The
salmon hums bright
pink in the December dusk + the dog believes
falling snow's a question
asked over and over again, he answers with barks,
sniffs anxious
where his two-hours-back footsteps have dis
appeared. The only
chance I've had so far I turned from the hole
in the ice, watched
friends offer vividity to its depth, the lake
a phone booth they
dropped the quarters of their youth into, *hello...*
we all steamed in dark
together. Who knew. They hooted, I hung back.
And what was it they
found or felt? That view, stars the endpoints
of distant icicles. They
emerged dripping, touched blue. *It's like going*
through, they said.
To where, to what. Who knew. Ellen loves me
despite that I've
never manned up + dropped myself into

measured harm
+ now the fish is ready, flesh flaky, out of place
in this cold: we
make meals from whatever we can, set the table,
count days till May,
pour the wine, dive in.

Status Update

This morning I woke to again not build a garage meaning the truck will like a western's badguy die scorched + alone in the unrelenting sun, in this case the Indiana sun which is sharper than other suns I've known though the sun is merely the sun and one truck is any truck, how many Ford Rangers were built in 1991 in St Paul? In 1991 in St Paul I was given permission by Nirvana then Pearl Jam to make anthems of my confusion so I learned to play guitar but confusion's only so many songs long + with guitar came the occasional attention of girls so *la la love you*, even here we are, *be my be my baby*, eventually my grandpa took pity on the shitty lessons radio offered + packed me into the truck he would later give me once his hip's hinges couldn't swing wide enough to make for easy entrance into the machine, we drove west three days then stood staring into a great gouge saying nothing + would that I knew what either of us was way back then thinking. Keeping it in's among the nicest songs and the truck's long since earned its patches (like suede elbows on a blazer) of rust and now that it's ancient I've finally learned to drive it right: pick a place to go, take the almost straightest route, move slow enough. For months after D + K moved to Philly I drove with their sofa in the truck's bed, stopped river side + sat cozy as Sunday football looking down the bluffs at the slow-going river which was the Mississippi because I'm from Minnesota because my parents found what they decided was love enough there because the trick is an itch can be either named or scratched but almost never both because Heisenberg or postmodernism or the fact that there's just the one sun but it shines here, 96° on a May Monday, and also shines on my uncle's house where my grandpa's ashes have been settled in the back

of a closet for four years, sealed in plastic, boxed
in cardboard, the titanium screw that helped his knee knee
for his last decade rattling loose. There's no such thing
as ever learning enough. It's hot where I live but not
where I'm from and I don't know where I'm going
but I know enough to say wherever I'm standing is home.

Framework

eventually canoe, tipped-over
 wheel barrow, eventually the full-life
that is the half full existence of empty implements,
 the withered balloons
tied to wrought-iron porch rail wheezing that
 the party was weeks back
+ since then cold days + colder nights, out back
 rough planks lay squared
around the geometry in which next year's garden
 will grow, in 4am dark the dog barks
at jeans dangling from doorknob, the ghost
 of my legs kept
like currency in the wallet of their Levi form
 + there is, three feet from
my front door, a glass box into which a man
 in navy blue daily
drops mass-mailer missives, requests for dollars,
 offers to solve problems I didn't even know
were worth the postage, today a magazine selling
 what watch + socks + wry lines to ply
in trying to convince beauty to get as naked as
 the woman on the cover
+ there were in Virginia rumors of a herd of cows
 which'd been tinkered with, holes
cut into their guts for science, fiberglass
 slapped over their exposed bits
like the hood of the red Corvette I walked past
 earlier today in rain
wishing the driver'd pedal a *vrrooom*, let loose
 a few horses to gallop through
the formless gray of this Wednesday afternoon,
 provide a soundtrack for the windows lying
curbside, the house they were pried from one more
 jack-o-lantern of dom
esticity, the flickering light within visible only if

one slowed + looked close enough into

Close Up

The day's news all utility : the state
has killed another killer, salt trucks and plows will be darning
the day's commute

like a sock overused on a slate floor,
fabric at toe + heel thinned as eyelid skin, membranous,
the merest film

sacrificing itself for the sake
of larger order : and what isn't : today is March : another
season + I'm looking

for where into the narrative to stitch
myself : not so much *where* as *which narrative* : today is both
so little and too

much : war + sickness : can Dave
legally marry Pete : the elements slosh each other like everyone
at Curly's, 11:15

on Saturday night as the drinks leak
into the Basal Ganglia which is to the brain as roots are to trees
which works only

if you believe the inside of a head
oak or elm : or take your pick : true or false : everything you forget
is a falling red leaf :

yes or no : the lightning of living has left
deep black burns on the inside of your mind : mine, too : it's easy
to forget that

at 1000x zoom all living's transparent
as overhead projector sheets full of corrected sentences and half
-canceled equations,

easy to overlook how great any day
that ends without dying or killing anyone while driving roads tricky
+ unnegotiable as mercy.

Fareway Metaphysics

I walk into the grocery store because something's
empty, a clear-plastic drawer of chilled air or
my idea for how to pass Saturday night hours
in such rurality the pigs here don't even cry
on their way to slaughter knowing no one will hear,
I walk into the grocery store because outside
there's rain but inside are boxes of crackers, canisters
of concentrate, because here I stand before shelves
of cheese + imagine my stomach's satisfied mooing,
because here I'm confronted by the fact that
all I choose—produce or kisses, this dog park or
that loafer—hinges on notions of vividity, some
mystic arithmetic I can't articulate any better than
I can the shocking glory of the curve of my wife's
thigh, the wordlessness that overwhelms the moments
we fit together in storms or bedrooms or confusion
over whose plan for a weekend is best and
the old song croons she says tomato and I say tomato
but the trick's of course that emphasis is what
we attach (like graffiti, bumperstickers) through
experience—the smell of hair in the morning, how
any hunger's satisfied—so you say *Ellen* and I
say *Ellen* but what I mean is my heart, the river
my soul's lived next to wherever I've lived, a view
in every direction for miles of rolling, fertile land
electricity sometimes longs so deeply for it allows
itself to become lightning, just for a moment +
what you mean is you walk into grocery stores,
too, for your own reasons, sale-priced cocoa, for
pineapple you can imagine goldly glistening once
you remove, with largest, sharpest knife, its
protective skin + however any of us plan to solve
questions of emptiness we'll all eventually pass
a pyramid of red tomatoes from everywhere,
the world over, and before them some of us will mouth

the only name we know, both hunger and hunger's answer.

Water over Water

We're closer to ocean than the limits of sky but it doesn't feel
that way—I'm three hours from a woman
who whispered *I'll miss you* in a language I barely speak, five
from anything I'd point to if asked *what's home?*
In the seat next to me a young man cradles a woman he didn't
have to leave in a country he never dreamt
he'd dream so often about. She stirs, he shifts, we bump arms.
They're maybe five years younger, eight, than I was
when I believed I could take my love with me anywhere—a darker side
of town, a different country—yet here I am, miles high,
still wanting love to be more like wine: close at hand, plentiful,
in containers which, once opened, stay
opened until every drop's consumed. *Sorry*, he smiles, I smile,
then turn again to the window. I suppose there's
an ocean down there beneath the oceanic clouds, and beneath
that ocean there must be whole whorls of life
gone undocumented—creatures uncatalogued, imagination-boggling
monsters of shadow and privacy. We believe
the monsters are down there waiting for us and our nature
documentaries, believe the monsters will wait.
His sigh is massive, big as a time zone, and we both look at
the woman restlessly resting in his arms. Fatigue
pocks his face but I want to whisper *We have to keep*
letting each other go to hold on. Our only real discussions
are tactile, our only stories of longing and for months it was magic, her
fluid and strange words, yet now all I want
is to understand her when she says *I'll miss you*. Something's important
in the hearing it. His finger grazes the tiny cup
of water on his tray and he brings his pregnant finger to his girlfriend's
lower lip, rubs the small wetness in. She doesn't move
but to me he whispers *She's burning up; she's been like this since Umbria*.

The first night. Dim hills stretching darkly beyond the house's
clay walls. The hearth lit with so much fire
it seemed ceremonial, even our shadows trailed smoke. The kitchen
dark after our long meal—mussels, bread, wine—
the bedroom upstairs with sheets turned down and pillows arranged,
but, for now, we sat in an old stone room off her kitchen.
Wide screenless windows, long cool benches, the night gathering

around and around us. Bats swooping among hills and her hand smooth, calm on mine. *The windows* I pointed.

What if they get in? *The bats?* We could just barely communicate, had traveled from Madrid to Trieste with a window always nearby—view as sketch pad, pictorial dictionary—telling our stories to each other, stripped and un-elaborate: the barest bits of self, just enough.

Bats? she asked, and I pointed to the dark shapes beyond in the dark sky, used my free hand to mimic a wing, some flying thing. She shook her head and rubbed her nose on my cheek. *No come in.* We watched a handful of bats swoop, glide pale-bellied almost within reach, right past the window, and she was right.

An unseen screen, I thought, *something Italian,*

and we sat together, letting our silence seep and our exhaustion deepen, watching bats fling themselves through dark before we finished the wine, spread the fire to embers climbed the stairs to the bed in which she above me whispered *All the love* and I beneath her didn't say or think a word of translation.

She groans, he shifts again into me. Ten minutes ago the pilot told us to look down, that we were above the deepest trench on the planet.

If you flipped Everest over, shoved it down there, it still wouldn't reach bottom.

Her cheeks are flush, eyes for a moment wild—she didn't expect to wake up this far from the ground.

Are you okay? he asks her and I hold my breath, translate, practice. *Siete buono?* Nods. Smiles. *It's so hot,* she says and though he already must've known—his own love as oven, there in his arms, of course he could feel—her saying it changes something. *Here,* he says, brings the water to her lips. The plane shudders. Now is the moment to fear, to clutch at anything stable. Shudders again—a throat readying to shout, a surface broken by a pebble—then we stabilize.

We look at each other, the young man and I, then at the woman in his arms. She says *Water over water,* settles deeper into his arms and chest, and with a different faith I might believe, since both float so seemingly easy across great gashes of night there's some difference between our tin cradle

and the crescent moon way out, gibbous and ghostly,
this pretend destination. He sets the water back down,
the cup's nearly empty. There's a story she keeps trying
to tell me, about her father and mother, some boat trip they took
and ended up stranded, some island. *They burn*
the boat she keeps telling me; it's not metaphor or story but true,
I've looked up all the words, for burning, for boat,
for stranded. Two nights and their only warmth the burning bits
of what should've carried them back. *How long?*
asks the girl in his arms, the girl next to me. Out the window
there's so much distance to the next cloud, far light,
it's hard to believe there's such a thing as touch, arrival:
How long until we're back?

III

After We Were Monkeys but Before We Became Fish Again

Whatever we can't roll up and smoke we'll mix with our last drams
of sadnesses and paint first our faces then our thumbs : o the tapioca
moon from the lowest branches of the tree we keep telling everyone
we're not really *hiding* in it's just we like keeping quiet, look at our
thumbs : oh untanned midwestern thigh of a moon, we shout, climb
further : the quickmixed paint is something like blue trying to show
its yellowest : we believe in the technology of rocks thrown hard :
the invention of language : blood in hand worth more than any amount
spilled : teeth in moonlight and we'll make up the words for whatever
we haven't burned yet once the fire's out : we'll pay with howls
what we can't buy with muscles : coffee : an affection for dim,
un-bell-struck midnight stretched black as intent over the tree and
all of us and our art, past the wide lake none of us has died in yet.

Here Here

the reward for not dying on some
post-license joyride or getting into bed
with a woman whose ex isn't ready to let
some aspects of the past go
is being able to cram handfuls
of grapes into your mouth whenever
you wish, a fourth grade redux of sitting
across the table from Bobby + Freddie
+ juicily shouting *I win* only now
Miss Benson won't yell because she's
no longer your teacher or alive
unlike the yellow flowers outside
in their wilt and shrivel which are
somewhere between dead and alive
because the sun lately trumps rain daily
and the ground, says the forecaster,
is pretty much concrete because drought
meaning when I planted the flowers
I was unintentionally asking they be
blooming jackhammers which phrase
applies fairly well to what passed
for what I once understood
love to be which was intimacy
which was skin which was a secret
I wanted to climb inside like a tent
and sleep under stars twinkling like
rewards way up for those alive enough
to know how and where to look

Outside/A/War

The bird beyond the window coasts
to land on the gun propped
against the dead tree, big and wild

these animals are different from what
I know. My friend's gone a week, I'm
to take care of his creaky old place,

candle-lit, a broom of bound grass
leaning in the corner, the sounds outside
and the sounds inside just about the same.

The rifle's his: he told me to shoot some
-thing good for us to eat on his return
but all I've ever killed are insects, things

which only pester because walls dictate
they're in the wrong place. The bird hollers,
perched like a dim metaphor, standing on

the barrel's business end. His own candles
too, of course: makes them like he made
the broom and the table, by hand and sweat;

says he'd learn to make soap if the process
didn't threaten explosion, plus he likes
to live in the green smell of Palmolive.

Something there is black in a black bird's
call. There are more guns, of course:
next to the lantern (refurbished, old

tin, scrubbed of oxidation, more light
than six bulbs) there's another rifle, same
blued steel barrel, same steady trigger,

waiting. I agreed to come out here because
I like to remember the difference
between on and off, that light's more

than a flicked switch, warmth a turned dial.
It's coming dark, mid-August: I can't guess
if the bird knows already that it'll go soon.

A candle pops like a shot and I jump:
a wick's dipped in wax a hundred times,
two hundred, but that first time, if just

an ant's breath of air clings as the wick
gets its first coating, when that light's
life is lived there's both brightness

and sound, pop with a hiss following: air
released after some unimaginable trap,
old bug freed from amber. I tap the window

and the bird turns from one profile
to another, scanning the house's handcrafted
edges, the marked boundaries, and when

he heaves unfolding from his perch
the gun lies down in shade, a made thing
made once more temporarily quiet.

Beefeater Drowns

Unlike the taste of D I can still
without blush or suffering
recall the way that first gin hit
while we sat
pretending next to each other
we didn't know the shape
night was taking as it scalloped
day's edges
blue to thicker blue. *gin and mint*
she'd texted from miles
out, + *tonic 2*: the list of what
I should be
ready for her to want once she
arrived with her Minnesota
thirst + shed-everywhere dog.
bet i can get
you thirsty too she texted some
miles later + I did not fall
asleep thinking the usual *could*
this be
thoughts—her name, how her
tongue, loosened by drink,
slid through *come on*. We believed
a shared
start carried merit, that electricity
formed from the fact that
we both meant the same place
when we
spoke *home*. Perhaps we'd begun
to run from
the same gun's report. I slept
on my arm so hard I felt
nothing for the day's first half
hour, D
on waking didn't or couldn't

or wouldn't stop blinking:
we came of age near the mouths
of moving
water, knew how thin the line
between fast flow + flood.
that was a nice boat she didn't text
as she drove
the next day away, both of us
guilty of buying, again, tricks
of liquidity, though buoyancy's
no measure +
nothing we kissed rhymed with *shore*.

Behind is a Relative Term

there are things I can no longer put/
fit into the corners I live: old cans half
empty: paint I used on the signs I was
so sure said what needed articulating : she's been
to this hill / I've been to this hill/ but not
once: together: what we're doing here is what
we're figuring out: she's twirling+tossing
some thing, a stick: what look like birds
turn out to be bats if you watch
long enough: + next to the cans of paint
there's an old box in which there's another
box, and in that box: a camera: my camera:
I've got so few pictures: have tried to take
so little: she's at the top of the hill, bottom
of the blue: early-evening sky: distance between us
spreads like a finger uncurling: I'm walking back
and forth: going toward and returning to: it sneaks
up, how suddenly there's either too much
of one, too little of the other: in the distance:
mounds of dirt: yellow machines have pushed
red earth into piles: new space for old-looking
homes: and how many signs are we afforded:
there's any number of things we won't (can't)
bring when/if we move: how the bed smelled
after we first kissed: the surprise that's inside
even the most hesitant yes: inside even the most
sure yes: she throws the stick high into the night,
right up into the sky: some rock: some giant's eye—
but we're seen: have already/always been
seen: moon's rising: sun has hardly set yet:
wind's picking up: opens and closes the coat
I'm wearing, opens and closes a nearby
screen door with percussive clicks : there's some-
thing we'll be saying yes to: soon: and until then
we'll move slowly: cans of paint and a camera and

empty clay pots that used to hold plants I kept
trying to negotiate toward blooming: living:
the stick flips way up: into some other dark: back
down into her hand: even if I shouted *why*
are you throwing that : shouted *when will you know*:
shouted *what is it we're trying to decide* the wind
would take the question before it got to her:
camera: paint: empty pots: it's been
years but: but : I still miss the home I longback
lived in: huge halls + basement: room for every-
thing and fireplace so big I could lay down
within it: stare straight up: blackness: she's
coming toward me: down the hill: behind me:
citylights: wisps of smoke from houses warmer
than we could possibly get out here: February:
twenty paces away: fifteen: she stops: :
throws the stick overhand into trees: one wood/
against another: and the sound just barely makes it
through the wind:

Seasonal Gamble

I see yr 7pm sundown +
raise you a firelit autumn
tree, recollection of woodsmoke;
time lost like a fruit uneaten,
fruit lost til rot: the trick of living
must be in finding uses beyond
sweetness, of finding unJuly-ed warmth:
and once the pencil's done
with love notes must it be burned?:
the rope may be handmade+beautiful
but we choke on the loose noose
of pleasure. She got out of her clothes
and into the lake. This was an earlier
September, still warm. She got
this tone in her voice when she wanted.
And set the clock back, wake
to more dark and frost. And eventually
November. The world tilts one way
one season, another another; the world
is not unlike how Victoria seemed
that September and lake-swum night,
kiss-ready and yessful, and the next day
quieter, farther. We tell ourselves
it is the world, a Victoria: some other
that tilts one way or another, not
ourselves. Not ourselves making
deals with trees, whispering
as we pass trunks *hold onto your leaves,*
please, hold on. Not ourselves
trying sweetwild and manic to tug
every last juicy bit of summer
before the same old clicking despondence
clacks the air like teeth, like a bone
dug up and dropped on tile,
dice.

St. Alban

The bird flew in, who knew, the days
were stretchy, lethargic, April a click
or two from full bloom and the doors,

we figured, would somehow—like
the stupid bits of ice clinging to shade—

take care of themselves. When was it,
the last time we trusted things to do
what they needed without our doing.

The bird flew in and Paul had just been
kissed, the window was still filigreed,

cracked from what—who knew—we
figured must've been a tough (but not
enough) boot, the neighborhood was

down but on the upswinging, in two
years we'd be priced out of the place

we for now called, in quotes, home—
which is just to say we made do as well
as we could given we were surrounded

by other things trying to find their way,
too. The bird flew in. No one wore shoes.

And then it was the bird had flown in.
I can go back still, stop the moment:
We never fought, Paul and I, dumb-

buzzed on the freedom of young men,
the hardwood floors we oiled for two

July nights then left alone, the way we ate
meals from the pots we cooked them in.
A stereo in the fireplace, we trawled

early 20s waters, beerless for months-
long stretches, adrift, and once a bird

flew in. Even as we stood there, watching,
and Paul didn't say In six years I'll have
two kids and I didn't apologize for having

had such loud sex he'd moved the TV
into the back room to avoid the muffled

huffling that constituted everything I then
knew of love. There was a moment that
shifted: the bird flew in to the bird had flown

in and we'd talked of what whoever'd tried
to kick his way in must've seen to so badly

want entrance: our slowly-filling bookcases,
our unlit matches, our three or four shiny
things—we were young enough to not yet

care to gather any glittering we came across.
That's a starling, Paul said, he was—this I remember—

wearing shorts and no shirt, as was I—
it was April, one night of warmth stuck
like a knife into the thick neck of a long

Minnesota winter, and for a moment it
faltered, flew everywhere at once: the bird

had found a way in but perhaps there was
still a way out, none of us knew what we

were looking for right then, either, and then

it winged right for the starred window, the
cracked point, as if it recognized an old

attempt at escape. And then the noise when
it hit, and then Paul running to the kitchen,
coming back with water, a wedge of celery—

who knew what food or magic it took to re-
fuel natural flight. We never would've said

we were stuck: we lived where our coming
and going was radar-less, easy enough, where
the only mail was magazines, coupons for

moisturizer or ingredients we'd never use
in any meal. I don't remember if, or how, we

ever looked at each other, before the bird
had died at our feet, after we realized we had
to move to deeper reaches, alone. I suppose

at some point we closed the door, but not
before knowing more cold was coming—

Thanks to the editors of the following journals (with special thanks to the fantastic Minna Proctor) where some of these things slept on earlier couches:

Barn Owl Review, Beloit Poetry Review, Cave Wall, descant, Diode, the Gettysburg Review, the Literary Review, Make Literary, RealPoetik, Salt Hill, Sixth Finch.

The work here (as elsewhere) is better/easier because of Bob Hicok and Tom Gardner, and the work here got lots of joy from Dan, Lil, Paul, Jake, Shannon, Carrie, and Jeremy, and without Ellen, and now Josephine and Virginia—impossible to say, other than that the work would be much less everything.

Weston Cutter is from Minnesota, teaches at the University of St Francis in Fort Wayne, IN, and is the author of *You'd Be a Stranger, Too*, *All Black Everything*, and *Enough*.