I can’t stand here all day, glands in a wrangle,
Like some brimstone preacher
Beating the bejesus out of his ratty Bible.

Parvenu and undermensch, slave to enabling vices,
I’m lost in a lanky rhetoric,
Simplicities on the fritz.

But you can’t make laws for monkeys, or poems
From some eruption in the nuts,
Every complication its own Vesuvius.

Poems: or as the Chinese warn,
*Disasters that come from the mouth.*
Sometimes there’s no wild honey at the end of the beeline,

Only these terse tercets
With no mercy on the rubes
Or the lithe appreciators of gilded tea sets.

There’s always some bother in the Balkans,
And tantrums among the voluble Italians. There’s always
A dent in the fender where the force fields meet.

So I’m learning to squeeze a little discipline
From the porous emotions, though they’re prone to go berserk,
Like weasels on a trapeze.
I’m learning to wean myself away from
Bacon and freak shows and the secret alchemies of women,
From wet bars in suburban basements.

Maybe I’m immune to nuance, as when
An artist’s model moves from
Nude on his canvas to naked in his bed.

I’ve listened for God in the shrubbery,
But no voice, no fire,
Just a robin’s admonishment, late sunlight on the leaves.

And now I’m old enough for heaven to have me
Grandfathered in, my crusty wings
A cross between magpie and rooster, less soft

Than the spotted crepe of my right hand:
Wings that would hoist this troubled body over the stars,
Where I can look down

And watch my old life rising
Like a weak rock in a watery world, standing aslant
In the salt donations of the sea.