Underway with Steam

Dennis Kennedy

Grand Valley State University

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Underway With Steam

I.

Though the tongue laughs
machine in us won't never last.
Blueprint and draft lost in ash
lines cast off from land
yet machine clicks rarely late,
heart a function of blood flow
mind a neural tangle:
straighten it if you can
or as my captain said,
the lowest of goods in the lowest hold

straight is the angle of ships shaft,
it's music divested of emotive matter
snow on steel yardarms,
wherein true fancy lies

put these characters in shape
the job of the captain
scissors and glue, lots of glue
machine the only game
and Bucky is convinced of survival
because the universe is limited
and man the shortest distance

II.

Covey of redwinged blackbirds
75 or hundred at evening
machine in two over wheatfield
broken by fossil-fueled explosive motion.
The road breaks in two the wheatfield
a line of direction
controlled by forgotten expedients
like the cathedrals of europe
or the dance of seed-splitting blackbirds

III.

The tongue waves goodbye
machine dependent on machine.
A teaspoon of sand in the reduction gear
a noise bigger than motion:
and no roadsigns at sea

Grey Day

Grey doesn't become you, day.
Unzip your clouds and prove to me
The sun hasn't bumped against a spiney star
And burst like a balloon,
Its fire soaked up by spongy stratosphere.
Blow your cold, rain-white wind away.
Wring out the air and trees,
And carefully collect your mud puddles.
Packed together in a ball
They're enough to make a river,
Or a sea.
Hang your moth-eaten fog on a falling star
And let me walk in your warmth
And smile at breezes tumbling among the sunshine.
Make me forget how ugly you are,
Dressed in grey.

by
Shirley Aslakson