

FOSSIL HUNTING IN THE PAINTED HILLS

for Sue, September 2014

The Painted Hills worn round from water
And wind made easy by good roads that wind
through turns before they end.

Soft lemon light and golden ground
aglow with last light, unsung
tweets from every bend; sound

of the wind and torch of the sun
ignites the wild rose at the river's edge.
A soft cure for the wounded runs

cutthroat through these shallows, the willows
wading, stretched into wild waters
without dread after miles of juniper

and sage down steep grades, hair-pinned
to the riverbank in slow, dizzy dissolve.
With the company we keep in company towns

we accept each day this gift, sanguine in design,
geared to take our time like the John Day
unwinding through layers of history. We deign

to leave impressions in limestone and clay.
We lay our simple chemistry into sentiments,
the force of the flow recorded in the wave

long after the flesh turns to stone.
Limbs, neither gaunt nor twisted, sing
alone but never isolated.

Half-dead cottonwood trees attend
to the promise of fire. Our heart's tinder nothing grand
beyond the scope of this art, rendered

in some small measure. We stand
side by side on the fencepost where half the spark
is a patient hand

We lean into the lilt
of some unseen meadowlark
giving its voice back to the land.

IN POTENTIA: A RE-VISION

“In essence, there is no universe
present without imagination...”
—Fred Alan Wolfe

The yogini flexes
to fix old sores
where old scores
composed for upper
and lower registers
fall outside
the signature of time.

It's best to first consider
your keyboard:
a seven-octave concerto on say
a five-octave instrument
makes a different music.
Lost chords and grace notes may be
enough to break the silence.

A collared dove
inside the ribs of spruce
during a chance snowstorm
throws a falsetto against
a deepening pause.
Some hear music,
some hear noise.
Some conflate the thump of their heart
with a thud of snowmelt from a slumping branch.

The unnerving night grows thick
with weak talk;
you're overwhelmed already
by sound without sense.
The yogini leans into a Kundalini fire
that flares up on perishable skin
to burn away just enough
to describe the indescribable,

illuminate the grace-notes.

You bend backward
all the way to the floor,
arms reaching back
far back to another level.