

Over Our Heads

By noon the roof is too hot to stand on
except in thick-soled shoes and hot even then,
the panels of three-by-ten heavy-gauge steel
too hot to handle except with gloves or hands
so scarred and calloused they can take it.

By one, with the desert sun still high,
the wind is gusting to thirty or so—enough
to lift the remaining sheets off their stack
and sail them lethally through the shimmering air
to land with a dull thud that crumples the metal
like so much newsprint.

By two
the tidal wave of red dust has rolled through
leaving another layer on everything.
Still no rain in sight, but it's due:
the Dog Star burning on the horizon each night,
Fourth of July right around the corner
(the day tradition says it's supposed to start),
mercury pushing toward the top of the tube
these past three weeks, pulling moisture up
from the equatorial belt.

For some
acts of God we seek shelter in the Buddha.
For some we stretch membranes overhead
resistant to sun and rain and ail, the eye
of the storm blown up out of the Gulf,
that white terror that might look in on us
at any time despite our best efforts
to get in out of the elements, to have
for a change once in a while some peace of mind.
Lay it out, screw it down, with luck
get it up before monsoon.