

This Animal Concupiscence

1

I gave up early on
believing in or looking for
escape from death in favor of
trying to find out how to make
the best of the situation.

Dancing bears came to mind
polar bears in polar seas
keeping drifts of ice floes
underfoot as long as they can
in the warmth of mating season.

2

On my way to work one morning, I watched
a roadrunner some distance ahead
run about halfway to the centerline,
turn, run back to the berm, wait a few seconds
then run back on the blacktop, stop,
turn, run back, hold, repeat again,
then again every few seconds like frames
of a silent movie looping over and over.
When I drove past I saw the other one
on the gravel dead. Later, on my way home,
the same cartoon still playing itself out.

3

This animal concupiscence of old age
Durrell called it, obsessed as he was
by the revelation of thighs loins hips
waist and breast, his eye and hand and lips
compelled to meet, to part, inviting the tongue
to slip into something more comfortable
than grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

The kiss of youth full of promise,
the kiss of age promises nothing.
The lusts of youth hot and quick,
ardent flame after flame after flame,
those of age tempered in ovens
of the exquisite here and now,
the passions of loss and presence of death.

4

Was that summer, then and now
the cold? The wine-red bird
eats the winedark fruit.

Now the cranes come gabbling down
the morning, the eagles behind them,
the boreal night at their backs.

The pumpkin moon setting in the west,
the mournful question that troubled our sleep
a horned shadow in the elderberry.

Long-sleeved days and vested nights
Come along, old friend, if we don't hurry
the bees will have those tree-ripened pears.