On my knees in the gymnasium, I pictured

   my mother’s jewelry box, my father’s
fishing rod, the mobile home park

   in Nappanee swept away. I envied
the missing still lost in the storm,

   licked clean by wind, faults torn away
like shredded wood and insulation.

   I wanted to see my uncle’s farm
from above, grain silo doors akimbo,

   lavender spitting blooms along the fence.
I wanted to see train tracks buckle,

   nail-driven straws of wheat. I wanted
to make the sound the wind made,

   black eye of the storm peering into
me, the funnel cloud as it swirlled.

   I wanted to be carried—
green sky, sudden hail—with everything

I knew: blue spruce, white pine, the greyshingled
barns of Whitley County, face

of the barber with his sharpened razor,

Marie at the Waffle House, Beau

Tucker over mufflers in his shop. I could

sense them all, faithful and faithless

passing overhead with car doors

and street signs, with stone angels

from the steps of the Catholic church

last seen cracked down the middle

as they disappeared over burning fields.
Closing the Gay Bar Outside Gas City

As if I’d dreamed it up, the front door still swings, and the dance bell rings before it dies amid alfalfa, stalks of corn. On the floor: a faded pair of jeans, buttons from a shirt. Two condoms coil like sleepy salamanders in the back. In Indiana nothing lasts for long, though here the bathroom lock still sticks, nourished each winter by ice and snow. Outside: bones of rabbits, possum-blur, some ghost’s half-eye through the window screen where now the only seed that spills is thorny vine and thistle taking back what’s theirs. Even the magpies, locked in some blood-sleep, stir in the eaves as if to speak of patience and regret. Stains from tossed eggs mar the sides, dents from stones pitched through windows boarded up where FAG and AIDS are sprayed in flaking paint along the front. In fifty years, only birds will couple here. Deer will pause where a door once opened out to starlight, locust thorns tearing like some last testament to beer and lust. Even now, a raccoon stirs near the window, looks in at me as it moves past, like some stranger no longer interested, some boy who left his lip print on the glass.
Today, I’m taking my father for more tests, his eyes failing even as we walk out into the knee deep drifts.

Like his father before, he takes two shovels from their hooks, the particles of his hands sewn somewhere in mine,

so much of him silent in me as we walk the bright hemorrhage of white. He starts at one end,

I start the other, each scoop unmaking the snow, which has taken over porches, stoops, skeletal trees hedging the road. Soon, he won’t be able to make out the handle he’s gripping. We don’t speak,

piling the crude heaps, first him, then me, the black grammar of railroad ties announcing the perimeter.

The weatherman calls for more—seven inches by nightfall—
but the old Chevy rattles
as I rev the engine,

my father leaning to scrape
the windshield clear of ice

until he’s certain I can see.