

Out of Bounds

Black asphalt abides between unbroken curbs of cement,
and orderly rows of streets control their crop
of sprouting traffic by signs of whistle and light,
if schoolchildren push a button, all the cars stop.

A spade defines my lawn at the edge of the walk,
and light poles accept a distance named on a map
in the city's files, and here the permits live
which allow a house to locate upon the earth's lap.

In the garden, arranged in beds, the flowers grow
chosen for size, the short stems down in front,
a canary, hemmed in a cage, still likes to sing,
space invites boundaries -- as a contrasting stunt

a sunflower, wind-seeded and rowdy, crowds in a plot
of innocent lilies and nods its great yellow head
as if it was pleased to be breaking domestic accord,
as if its seed by chance would be widely spread.

A stroke of the scythe or hoe will empty the space
it usurps and restore the lilies' prestige. I've found
a word from the jungle confounding my patterns of thought
and won't be dug out where I give it such fertile ground.

Metamorphosis

The afternoon slept while I
waited for you in my web of
hunger, and I watched a spider
crouched in a hole, wound up
tight as a spring, motionless
as a stone. I saw a lone fly
circle the hole, then buzz away,
an ant started to enter but
turned back, a tired bee warned
himself away, I breathed the crisis
of a baited trap -- and when I heard
your step and voice, did you know
my antennae quivered, did you feel
fangs thirsting for your throat?

-- James Hearst

Cedar Falls, Iowa