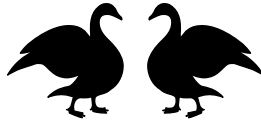


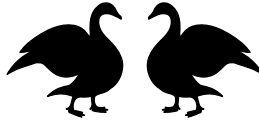
THE BANANA EXPLOSION OF 1936



No one believed it at first,
that bananas could bend the domes
of St. Stanislaus, God's work.
Yet for a block in every direction, the glass
from the windows crashed into the streets
and there was nothing left to do but drink.
"The drinkingest town in the west"
had a pub on every street. Long days
spent at Agnew and Brown's pigeon ball
factory earned small pay for hard work.
At James Jelly's cotton factory
they'd file out at the end of the day
truly believing that a drink from
a Bakewell's glass was the way
to cut grime from the throat. Prohibition
barely dampened these streets
where booze barons had worked
as celebrities and whiskey came at
sixteen dollars a quart. The first club,
The Devil's Cave, sold bourbon in a heavy
glass which they raised to FDR
and there was celebration in the streets.
This was a Democrat, in fact the first,
a city like ours could support.
Work in the mills went on as long as

there was beer to drink. Lights, coal fires,
and pitch pots burned as strong at noon
as in the night. But for every drink
a knee was also bent under the stained glass
of St. Stanislaus. There was a moment
to drink consecrated wine and walk quietly in the street.
A day when perhaps there was no work.
These sacred laws were brought to the city first.
But the gas explosion in the ripening room
had twisted the towers beyond what work
can repair. And so, with glass and steel they would
rebuild the street with pious hearts and drink.

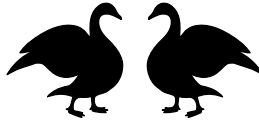
THE SHAPE OF A CITY



Two funiculars
 remain inclined
on Mt. Washington.
 On the ride up,
“The Golden Triangle”
 becomes a tiny
platter of glass and steel.
 And riding down
is like a heavy coal
 centering in my gut.
I know the gumwood
 and locust rollers
are long gone,
 and that cast-iron sheaves
pull us up and down--
 arms and eyes--
legs and ears.
 What is friction?
Or counterbalance?
 What if this bluff
one day will crumble?
 Kirk Lewis be damned.
The incline you designed
 hoists my head in and out
of latitudinal grooves.
 Alarm: 1 Bell. Ready:

2 Bells. Start: 3 Bells.
No foul language.
No credits for freight.
Do not open the
rectangular panic button
(aka the window).
The Tin Angel watches
down from the heights.
And at another restaurant
nearby, over dinner,
Dad proposed marriage,
and ever since I've been
crashing down the cables,
farther from this city.

WHAT THE TRAIN SAYS



From my house
 on the
hill
 I hear honey,
chai, cinnamon, like swirls
 through
the valley.

Near the
 river
it yowls
 hollow.

And from far
 or not so far
 a cruel
silver city
never
 fails to
whisper back.