

Origin Story

by Bill Yarrow

My father taught me how to solder
and that's when I first started to write.
Now, when you hold the soldering
iron in your hand and depress the trigger,
the tip of the gun heats up. Novices uncoil
the solder and place it on the hot tip,
but that just results in it melting and
dripping uselessly into nothingness.

What you need to do is place the tip
of the iron against the contact to be soldered
and then touch the solder to it. Then you'll
get a nice bead against which to lay the wire
you want to connect. I really wanted to form those
nice beads in my poems, but I guess as in tennis and
with exercise and even conversation, easy does it.

So I heated up some nouns and placed some cooler
verbs alongside, but my sentences began to deform.
Then the melted parts started coagulating. Eventually,
I found that verbs needed to be hot. Hot! But if I fired
them up too much, I wound up exploding my piece, so
I learned to be careful about the temperature of words.

It's all about adhesion, the tight seal. You want
the contact to be secure. If a word or a wire pulls
away, the circuit will be broken and the thing
won't work, and it has to. I mean, if the thing won't
work, then what are you doing? What good is it?

My father was a miser about time, but he let me
labor under my delusion, think that I was doing
the work when it was clear I was not. None of my
contacts held. All the wires I connected pulled away.

If you had looked at me from afar, you would have seen a boy sitting on a wooden stool playing with contacts, littering a counter with blobs of solder.

If you had looked more closely you might have seen a boy learning that the best teacher of anything is failure.

Anyway, blistered finger by blistered finger, here I am.

