

Quintet in a Minor Key Near the End of Time

by Gary Hardaway

Gravity as Destiny

The one thing I believe in is collapse.
Abandoned buildings collapse. Civilizations

collapse. Financial bubbles collapse.
Stars and galaxies collapse. Falling

is something that comes quite naturally
to puffed up things. Like the soufflé

in the oven you planned to serve
to hurrahs at your dinner party.

The bones curve inward as you age. The vigor
goes out of you. Get used to it. Embrace it. It is your destiny.

Subsistence Culture

Hunt and gather. Hunt and gather.
Keep the numbers small and close.
Don't defile the land with tractors
and Roundup. Don't defile the air
with burnt offerings of coal and oil.
Defy the impulse to grow beyond
your means and the means of the
place where you lie at night.
Subsist. Never exploit for goals

abstract and meaningless when
the meaning is the smile of faces
gathered in a meal around the fire.

Contingencies

There is no understanding
only a striving against odds
to understand. Despite

whatever faith you have,
understanding is provisional,
contingent upon attention

and the strength of knowing
how little can be known
by two selective eyes, two

imperfect ears, and nerve ends
that still feel the missing limb.
Flavors and odors confuse

and fail with a head-cold
or fever. Trust nothing
but trial and error and a

blind faith in perseverance.
Trudge on, citizen. Surely
knowledge you can trust

for the ever diminishing
span of your life
will show itself.

Clanging on the Bars of the Cage

Will language ever stretch
to let us see and know

particle and wave
in simultaneity?

Will we always stick ourselves
in either this or that

rather than this, that,
and the other?

The cage of pattern is strong.
Fluidity evades me once again.

Sunday Service

How like sermons certain poems are
but empty of the pointed sticks
of sanctimony. They focus instead

on the wonder and terror of the world
in words stolen from the ordinary
for the work of awe and trembling.

How they all beat the small drum
of the word within the world
compelled to speak its way into being.

