

## APPROPRIATE INTERJECTION

Seven in the morning laying insulation  
and wiring electric with a friend and his friend  
who make money building houses.  
Laying insulation at seven on Saturday  
because of a promise made the night before  
at the bar where the ambition to learn  
something about house circuitry  
appeared like a blown fuse. This pink shit  
makes you itchy. Not so with my friend here—  
he's worked with this stuff so long  
he sleeps on it, wakes up,  
throws a piece in the toaster, eats it slowly  
with cream cheese and coffee. Shouldn't we  
be wearing respirators or something?  
How the hell should I know?  
But this is good. This kind of work  
is good for me—re-callous these grandma hands  
I've grown. Like back in those summers  
when I tar-sealed blacktop  
on ninety-five degree early mornings. "And then  
in the afternoons," I tell them. On break  
we smoke a joint in front of the site, drink  
water, sit there in silence. Silent like that  
until I start to count breaths. And wonder  
what happened to last night's beer brotherhood.  
But then I recognize the similarity  
between our collective awareness  
and the object of our unfocused gazes:

Margaret's Creek running muddy and a little high  
along the other side of the road.

I could try to articulate this thought—  
it might break the silence. Then again it might  
make more. And I want to work with these guys  
on future jobs, so instead I tell them how  
I once caught a five-pound largemouth  
a quarter-mile up this creek  
that jerked so hard in my grip  
she stuck two of the treble hook barbs  
from the top-water Rapala I caught her with  
into my thumb, how I tried for an hour  
to loosen them from the nerve, feeling it  
in my front teeth, fish in the water, gone,  
how I had to push the points  
clear through the side of my thumb  
and clip the barbs with rusty wire cutters.  
“Sure,” I add, “there’s good fishing in this creek  
if you know the good holes.”

Then my friend’s friend holds out his left thumb,  
a nubby little thing, tells us about an accident  
he had with a circular saw.