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Between Neighbors

The complainant is a big man
 in his own goddamn front yard
 in a wheelchair, his voice as high
and highly offended (but only half
 as loud) as the dogs barking
 on his porch. His goddamn neighbors
(a young male couple
 standing their own ground
 deadpanned, on the other side
of the chainlink fence) went and aimed
 their hose at his expensive bird
 and hosed it. It was innocently
catching a little healthy goddamn sun
 in its cage. The cop bends close
 to listen. Then he walks off
to consult the complainees
 who say the barking, the barking goes
 on and on till they can't, just can't
stand it. If they pass on the sidewalk,
 the dogs bark. If they decide to swing
 on their porch swing, the dogs
bark, so, yes, they hosed his parrot
 and would do it again. The big man says
 between barks he needs, listen, he needs
the dogs as a signal to tell him
 strangers are nearby. The cop explains
 loudly the definition of *nuisance*,
issues a warning, turns his palms
 like a double stop sign up and against
 opposing sides, then demonstrates
keeping the peace by bending
 forward and saying, "Polly,
 want a cracker?" and offering

through the cage bars, one healing finger,
and the wet-backed, green-backed,
red-white-and-blue para-
military macaw gives a counterdemonstration
to all of them of what can happen
if you give somebody, anybody the finger.

On a Glass of Ale Under a Reading Lamp

My fingers go around it
and so do the small flies.
They too want something
headier than night air
and lamplight. They don't know
what they're after either
but have more than one sense
of *where it is*,
and it grows more and more
desirable as they give in
to their desire. Why else
were they given wings? The right way
is here almost at the lips
of this other thirsty creature
who is risking a desire
like them to drink without drowning,
whose hand is hovering
in the light to show them how
to touch good bitterness
again, not knowing why.

An Informal Elegy for Neckties

Many still hang in closets, bearing the signs
of a thousand and one immemorial knots
or in folds of tissue paper in narrow boxes
on shelves or in shut drawers, never to be exposed
under the chins of men in photographs
who are no longer with us, who have grown even more rigid
like mediums demonstrating manifestations of ectoplasm
or like drunks in the act of redecorating their own shirt-fronts.

No matter what their designs and configurations—polite geometry,
foursquare tartans, old school diagonals, bilateral disagreements,
attempts at monochromatic subtlety, insignias of family curses,
chaos—they have reached a common end.

The authorities in charge of disappointment and isolation
have always taken them away from prisoners.