

like a Mallarmé negation, *no bauble*
of travel, no vesper bell, invites the appetite
it moderates. Language pretends to know
what's best, a waiter pushing the day's specials.
The Heathrow Express is fast compared
to the Oxford Local or All Star. Locals avoid
the National Rail, knowing you can't bring
a bike on board. The locals know, I only know
about the locals. I learn the names of streets
I'll need to walk at night. Everything I learn,
indulgence or need, the pub that serves
its stews at six, Tesco on Magdalene,
Blackwell's on Broad. The back of my hand
could hold much more: I have the traveler's
exact change, the traveler's delirium
of unrelated facts. Memory pretends to know
what's relevant but lacks any independence.
So, these soapworts, twenty-cousined perennials
blooming at the foot of Christ Church. For days
I practice this unfond scenicness, this game
of right turns past garages and rose gules.
Travelers love what it would pain them to own,
red ivy, steamrollers lumbering down streets
too soon accustomed, overcast. The locals
have a color for every color, a word for every
word transposed for possession. From the coach
I see the grave of things I've traded out,
clean as Cotswold, unrenewable, grieved.
Locals have a slight for the sight of me.
Want and need look at each other with envy.

On the Forces of Improvisation under the Gun Law

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE of improvisation is to say *yes*
no matter the line cast by your partner.
All must agree on the reality before them.

Improvisation is a game Samaritans play
as they run out of a movie theater,
act as human shields for children.

Here improvisation is also called humanity.

The principle of the gun law is that anyone
should have the right to buy what may kill
a room full of people: this failure is freedom.

I'm sorry there can't be more poetry in this.

A gun backer argues with the irreverence and zeal
of one who can never be proven wrong.

He is improvising.

He's of those men who depend
on my politeness, he says visualize
which end of the gun you want to be on.

When stuck, express disbelief, says the manual,
but that move quickly turns to despair.

He owns a gun farm in Florida—they grow
in swamps, like water chestnuts.
Watercolorists paint them year-round,
open barrels gleaming from the marshes. 