

## THE SEEING IS GOOD

*for Gina Werfel and Hearne Pardee*

On the highest peak of Carl's ranch  
there is a rough brick throne  
where he  
or I, can sit, survey  
the domain: to the west,  
the faint ship-etched sea;  
everywhere — splayed out hills,  
up to now too green for our painters.  
Cleared hills, reddening in jags along ridges, hills  
contending  
to upstage in tan and forest green  
other hills.

I owe this landscape another look  
after your oils, friends.  
I want to learn from you resurrection  
of the living body of this land.  
For what shimmers before me, in the distance  
(or on your stretched canvas)  
is not grass or brush, or this sky,  
but a colored plane,  
fields of unswaying ochre, green, blue.

Overlapping areas —  
take that insistent redwood's jut up  
— do most to flex space - that one  
crosses in front of a field and a jeep track  
(the unseen piece of the track is its hold on being).  
It continues, up,  
the top branches  
(which you made me see resemble the trees' own separating cone)  
up against the sky.  
The tree roots "in front" in us  
and draws into that front  
with a force stronger than any superconducting magnet,  
a chunk of ground at the foot of the tree.  
Higher up,  
the space around the trunk  
is shoved rudely back.  
We have held our hands around a trunk and know nothing's there.  
The strong hummock- and sky-moving brain  
loves to work over the space around trees and fences.

(continued, with stanza break)

There is more.  
From black and white tinting, grain.  
In loss of intensity and lost outline  
you compound "receding", make gray valuable.

And more:  
the lit hue reaches for the sun.  
You move the earth by darkening,

And:  
You cover areas, paint broadly.  
We are not permitted to digress  
zooming in  
on that mossy oak tree,  
the cow that might be just a rock or a sculpture.  
You force the recalcitrant (or frightened)  
eye to see all, all of it, in one.

We know the hills are old, older than we are  
and so we turn to them, we need them strong and there.  
To come from, to return, there.  
If I were to walk there tomorrow, climb,  
the wind, my buddy,  
would rustle oats and poppies for me,  
and I could see you both,  
separated by a ridge,  
painting the same, always different hills.

The shadow of an airplane climbs the slopes,  
revalidating their sharp curve.  
It vanishes,  
now swoops on another ridge.  
Like a manta of the sky,  
doing soft backward somersaults,  
at the edge of the real  
that your art  
makes us see.