

X begins with fiddling  
& giving the earth their heel in socratic asking  
by the dog  
tuning in old timey tablature.

as banjo eyes guitar eyes bass eyes mandolin  
not claiming progressions.  
not naming assembly.  
known to go with accidence & grace.

*there's a feather that writes without ink by their bed to  
trace an answer to the test of memory. like pretty boy  
baying through chain link until he flew. when the  
locals read his insides spread by traffic – taking the red  
velvet auspices. or the screams of kits caged as bait for  
the red fox too shrewd to take it. who ate community  
layers despite their sly wire. despite the new hound's  
knack for rushing the impact wreath of scattered flush.*

mechanics so smooth —  
elbows flow like greased bearings  
setting a tail vise on a workbench  
locking wood in place.

spasm sculpted by what's at hand  
washboard spoons stovepipe jug  
& what forms a band now five notes old  
picks up sun equations.

*their aunts on slow time sang when noon struck &  
learned to duck down back steps when the sawed-off  
over-under flashed. their uncles rebuilt mill houses and  
spat between beehives before strokes. they all prayed to  
thrill hill — gulping blackberries behind the church  
meant for jelly and pie. while twilight bade bats sweep  
sky. summoned the mystic entrance of deer.*

accords pulled sideways find trance  
in a comb & tissue medicine show.

admitting minds to a stream of folk  
outside the thickening agent of the bridge.

first chair is a milk stool  
    spoon-feeding with raised brow pass around.  
handed down rosin flies thicker  
in touch with an unfixed spiral up.

*X discovers the secret of two plots on the same eternal  
acre. "heavenly things and the things under the earth."  
imagines shovels piercing ground that grew flowers  
beside the plastic ones. above the river, below the small  
town ruined with the redo, but still plating better  
butter beans. unless the deep-freeze quits and then no  
one's fed like family.*

*arkansas traveler* promenades.  
    skiffle music walking the ledge again.  
strays outside to raise history  
    *cano      canow      canoa*

before spelling settled down —  
tied to planks fading into fog.  
    that dugout that knew the boundary  
waters without X.

*his fucking canoe. now foundered on pole barn rafters.  
fuzz-coated with carpenter buzz before a plan for  
portage over the breadth of the old north. might as well  
be seventeen hands of a broken nag left undone. might  
as well be silence-treated fencing spoiling a path thru  
parataxis to subvert story. or paddling one's own  
marking the susurrus loss of distance.*

not much headroom in an 8-bar song.  
    low ceiling slows release.  
yet, being all at once parses the good book  
to ease what climbs without sign.

a clawhammer flourish unknots  
the paradox of going back in time  
that says X never arrives  
to bring testimony home.

*a trace of smoke below the host kept by silver trays  
offering shots of blood of the lamb. looks like the trees  
are on fire, but no it's steam off the river spilling in that  
easy style outside the row of looms — the source of  
their rolled-tongue legacy and tricky heart. turning  
cheeks makes the weak burn longer. "keep us in your  
prayers and no cock-blocking friday night."*

this session can't keep feet  
from bucking their version of ground —  
    an unplowed field  
between ridges bears grain.

bringing the last half of the song  
to unveil whiskey & a warm place to stay.  
    even if X wrote their way in  
without expecting floating.

*when buoyancy is greeted with a gap-tooth grin posing  
as a life-saving patch — his best go at a stand-in while  
dad's away. sending back pachinkos from the war to  
make up for no good reason. swearing now at spirits,  
by the plane tree, by the goose, by gazelles & wild does.  
leading ghost tours through instruments spiraling in  
big air over fire in the company of circular venting.  
nurtured as an ornament with feathery seeds. "every  
guy with a gun claims a downed bird in a covey rise."*

beating the straws  
is matched with washboard resonance  
that shivers timbers  
of a square-rigged ship.

to learn by ear

is being plucked by choices  
    bending notes high & tight  
with pitches under the chin.

*“foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but  
the son of man has nowhere to lay his head”, slides  
from a mouth of one gone on a downtown train.  
“domine labia mea aperies...” the sunset slips into  
cheerful animation. where a firehose transforms to  
hummingbird, to put out the nectar. to spread luck  
from the other side. X purrs, “we’d marry the back of  
his mind. “we’d say, ‘I do’ to her hair.”*

their chop chord lick  
hints where ouroboros bites her tail.  
    is an appalachian tell  
among frailing on the strings.

where the room is read.  
& those that know will catch the look  
saying the circle will soon shut.

*texts float between floors. in shifts. in sibilant gowns.  
taking turns turning. on a stroll through endless trophy  
rooms. “I am a human boy”, she said in the landing  
zone. “I’m from a place called ‘touch’.” then looking  
up at X, “do you want to play?”*

& all voices in unison stop.