

## afternoon temptation

fall itself ripens on the branch  
these temperatures will cull  
the last leaves to ground  
nest comfort into every house  
open the sap in golden teas

an evening with friends who  
don't ask much is arriving  
with weather that steals the  
bar-hard street shadows

smoke skeining from chimneys  
the slack rows of property

the highway the rusting tangle  
of the foundry across the river

the college outside town  
the cemetery plotting its hill  
everything taking on the knap  
of lethargy and negation

we carry a fug of raw onion  
in our mouths and are hard  
to the touch and thirsty as rattles

our skin so red it would blister  
tongues and scald a callous  
with just a glance in a kitchen

and because there is nothing  
can or must be done we find

ourselves cooling under open  
windows, rinds pared of all  
their soft flesh and browning

—*Andrew Vogel*