

APPROPRIATE INTERJECTION

Seven in the morning laying insulation
and wiring electric with a friend and his friend
who make money building houses.
Laying insulation at seven on Saturday
because of a promise made the night before
at the bar where the ambition to learn
something about house circuitry
appeared like a blown fuse. This pink shit
makes you itchy. Not so with my friend here—
he's worked with this stuff so long
he sleeps on it, wakes up,
throws a piece in the toaster, eats it slowly
with cream cheese and coffee. Shouldn't we
be wearing respirators or something?
How the hell should I know?
But this is good. This kind of work
is good for me—re-callous these grandma hands
I've grown. Like back in those summers
when I tar-sealed blacktop
on ninety-five degree early mornings. "And then
in the afternoons," I tell them. On break
we smoke a joint in front of the site, drink
water, sit there in silence. Silent like that
until I start to count breaths. And wonder
what happened to last night's beer brotherhood.
But then I recognize the similarity
between our collective awareness
and the object of our unfocused gazes:

Margaret's Creek running muddy and a little high
along the other side of the road.

I could try to articulate this thought—
it might break the silence. Then again it might
make more. And I want to work with these guys
on future jobs, so instead I tell them how
I once caught a five-pound largemouth
a quarter-mile up this creek
that jerked so hard in my grip
she stuck two of the treble hook barbs
from the top-water Rapala I caught her with
into my thumb, how I tried for an hour
to loosen them from the nerve, feeling it
in my front teeth, fish in the water, gone,
how I had to push the points
clear through the side of my thumb
and clip the barbs with rusty wire cutters.
“Sure,” I add, “there’s good fishing in this creek
if you know the good holes.”

Then my friend’s friend holds out his left thumb,
a nubby little thing, tells us about an accident
he had with a circular saw.