

The Porcupine

He is black, plowing with purpose
against new snow
silky guard hairs tugged aside by wind
 reveal hollow quills
 barbed tips

across the yard
his tracks trace a curious shuffle
bulk atop squat delicate legs
 shifting side to side
 a drunk trying to walk a straight line

near-sighted
he advances almost to my boots
stopping to sniff, peers up
 eyes gleam with dark intelligence
 stored over generations

what greenery in every season
where to find water in winter
how to roll in a bristly ball when foxes probe
 how to impregnate without impaling your mate
 --wisdom of ancestors

his den, dark sheltered in a maze of passages

beneath granite left by quarrymen

hungry, he ventures out in moonlight or daylight

 this day he keeps to the ground

 grazing on wind-thrown twigs from the pine

tomorrow he will climb the tree like a telephone worker

going out on narrow branches, reaching

bending a bough

 to his small rodent mouth

 his chewing never ceases