

FALLOW FIELD

And so, with the beaked prow of the capital A
held in front of you like a divining rod,
sod-breaker, clod-cleaver, crust-cutter, scab-scratcher,
push off into the disused field, where those weeds
of a decade's dereliction are matted like a beard.
In your dreams, the plow turns up a buried talent,
a golden cache in nuggets like seed corn
buried long ago, under the rotting head
of a trash fish: the carp of truth, the catfish
of humiliation. But that's just dreams. In memory,
a fat boy drags a busted sleeper sofa
across the field, toward the midden of tires
and tractor parts beside the dilapidated
chicken house. The boy sweats and strains like an ox.
The heavy sofa cuts two furrows through the field,
one from each leg that scrapes the dry dirt.
He works himself dirty and winded, lurching forward
with the filthy core of the family's abandoned back room,
upholstery torn and greasy with use, redolent of pet piss
and rat-scrabble and the furtive Hustlers hidden
in the folded mattress. This is a start. He is yet
to rip out the carpet, push the sluices of ammonia
and housepaint through to reclaim the room and its shelves.
Shame or mania drags him as he drags the hulk,
paraphrasing Rilke without knowing it:
I must change my life. But that's just memory.
Now, facing the heart's fallow field, and knowing
how much good life you've sown on barren ground,

how much has gone to seed, never minded or seen through—
now, cut deep into this new paradigm of dirt:

put your back into it. And at the end of your row,
reverse; make something of the old Adamic curse.