

Buttons

The sons of friends have learned to fold and snap paper
into abruptly-coming noise at my head. Oh, let them
in their red-faced rowdiness have a bit of fun at my expense,
I said to myself, what have I done so worthy of respect?
I've worked soil through a sieve, let it cover seeds I couldn't see.
I've taken pleasure in rolling up loaves of once-risen dough.
Yesterday I spent one hour picking free a broken zipper,
then spent another hour stitching in a new one to replace it.
Arvo Pärt came on the radio; it was easy to keep going.
Once I even sized and joined by hand six graduated leaves
of gauzy fill when I might have paid little more
for manufactured shoulder pads. Less and less
does my vocabulary match that of the television selves.
Less and less do I buy what they assume I have,
not to mention what they sell. More and more they seem
to speak and reach out to one another. I remember when
the newsman sat alone and looked me in the eye.
I might as well take one of the overlarge buttons
from my great-aunt's quilted box that even I have failed
to find a use for and strap it to my wrist for a watch.

Why Do Men Spit?

I've seen it used as punctuation, transition,
as a substitute for content when there's a lack of that.

Paired with an action to be taken, spitting stalls and stretches
time by importance of the pause.

A man who spits in solitude has been talking to himself.

Some time before he died, I put the question to my father.
I could do this because I'd never seen him spit.
I could see that he was interested.

His face took on that focused look it used to have
when speaking with a man his age
—someone he was impressed with, or wanted to impress.

But by the time I'd asked him this, we were old.
I hadn't seen that expression in a while.
Eventually he said, "I honestly don't know."

I'd made him think; he'd given me as much as he could.
It was a good day in our relationship.

Method

I do not set goals.
I move from bed
to the doorstep
where the news
awaits me, rolled.
The plastic bag
slips off easily,
the rubber band
resistantly.
I grind the coffee,
set up the drip,
push the button.
Wait. It's not
conscious, this
process—nor
contemplative
in the least.
Nonetheless,
from this start
the day does
find release
from its routine.
It's at this
point, I think,
that we'd
expect the sun
to glint
along the iced
railing of
the phone line,

the phone
to ring, the
heretofore
unnoticed
winter finch
come down fresh
from boreal
Canada
to lift and land
a little closer
to where I am
so I can
get a good
long look,
the wire to
continue
glistening
a while
above the snow
like it's a fuse
about to be
consumed.
Not that that
is what
occurs today.
It could,
but doesn't.
Some other
noticed
stream of
things is
handling that.
It's covered.