

Barry Sternlieb

DEMOCRACY IN COAL COUNTRY

"When the psalm sings instead of the singer" W.W.

There's an old graveyard
down 41 where he loves
to sit and hear wind
through the bucktooth stones,
letting sweet disregard
reign his mind. He's learned
it's worthless planting silence
if, hill by hill, the words
find their way across earth.

A smoke-eyed bitch limping
wise among weeds keeps up
with the invisible,
trails a faint pulse
of scent, stone to stone,
patient as the backcountry.

Heads down, neither is conscious
of the pale morning moon
whose step dampens grass
like a wish to forget,
no more, no less,
what the past will become.