

Intimation

I is for intimation, not intimacy.

Well, intimacy too, if you'll have it.
I is for intimation, a word I like very much.
It's like sentiment versus sentimentality.
I get sentimental about the iamb.
You see it everywhere.
It's almost natural to speak in iambs.
It sounds like you're about to define yourself.
It sounds like there's lots that will come after.
It sounds like there's a kind of dip into the unknown.
It smacks of big promises and big revelations.
This book is not written in iambs.
This book is for the non-reader of poems.
This book is for the reader who thinks this is prose.
This book is for the reader who'll wonder why.
Why the sky is always blue, but couldn't it be more?
Why the salad yesterday when there were kebabs?
Why al fresco when there are seats inside?
Why parquet when there are wood-looking ceramics?
Why this isn't poetry, and how it should be.
It is poetry, Francis said.
I hope it is, I said.
Didn't you say it was? Francis asked.
Yes, I said, I did say it was.
Then it is, Francis said.
That made me happy.
I is the most powerful vowel of them all.
I is for identity and knowing who you are.
I is saying I can and I am and that's what I'm about.
I is saying I know life can be a bitch.
I is for that sort of intimation that intimates.
The sort of intimation that intimates the real.

I is about the real also, and the connections in between.

Nausea

N is the muck that comes out of your mouth.

The last time I wanted to vomit was then.
Then was years ago.
Then was not worth remembering.
But language has a way of making you remember.
My memory is made up of language.
And image and imagery.
Then the language makes up metaphor.
And the muck, the nausea, is made new.
It is a good kind of muck, muck with pretty words.
N is for the nonce sonnet.
N is for the denuded form, beyond structure.
N is for Noelle Kocot, whose lines are a mystery.
The way the mystics wrapped lines around a vision.
And left the vision its small place in history.
The mystics had nausea too, as if filled to the brim.
As if pregnant with premonition, the pained knowing.
There was a great love in their sadness.
That kind of great love is beyond reach.
That kind of great love is reserved for true savants.
That kind of oracle sits at the mouth of Plato's Cave.
History should have had a name in Sartre's book.
Each object must have talked to each other.
And themselves.
The soup to the bowl, the chalkboard to chairs.
Kafka was standing on a chair.
He was looking at Simone de Beauvoir.
She was seated in an armchair, holding Sartre's hand.
Camus was in her lap, his hands all to himself.
His hands stank, as if he had vomited into them.
They stank of bile and ammonia and sulphur.
They stank like the dead rats trapped in a cage.
The cage was on a beach far from Jericho.
The cage had been there for days.
Around it were seated a flock of seabirds.

N is for newness, even if it stinks. Of death and dead meat.

Oblong

O is for my favorite shape in the world.

I love oblong because of how the word sounds.
People think sonics should be a poet's strong suit.
A poet is a painter too.
And the pictures become equally important.
I like how oblong is more than a rectangle.
It isn't exactly an ellipse.
It has two straight sides, stiffened like a boat.
It looks like a sandwich from Subway.
I like all the fresh vegetables and mayonnaise.
I like honey mustard and ranch dressing.
People say that's too much dressing.
There can't be too much sonics or too much imagery.
There isn't too much of a good thing.
Unless you're trying to kill yourself, people say.
But when you've died once, you learn to love death.
Death too.
O is the ode to life, and the kind of life that lies beyond.
O is for the ottava rima, and the meaning of its rhyme.
O is for its heroes.
O is for the unwitting martyr behind the lyric.
O is for the sonneteer's octave before the volta.
The volta is another kind of turnaround.
O is for that small space of waiting.
Between the first door and the next.
Even death can be a good thing, if you think about it.

There are oblong coffins, and they're expensive.