

Patrick Hurley, Eight selections from “Neck”

[1]

Answer as kinetic structure
presupposing then formulating
the question

Abstract structure and
relative position as
a form of meditation

Late summer air's
nostalgic feeling
like a sound
pulling me
into myself

Anger too
penetrates the diaphragm
like a bifurcated sycamore

[2]

Discrete piece of
Information discarded
bamboo disks
tumbling in sequence

Patience is one dog
on the other
side of the fence

From a dilapidated shack
another transmission
or alien vines on
a brick wall flowering
with impossible beauty
in colors that cannot exist

[3]

Dense fruit falls—
still the citizens
perfect their containers

Through roots and systems
slowly now into
decomposing labyrinth

Solution?
 Synthesis?
Symbiosis?

The man in the hat
waits in the shade
he overhears the
secret transmission

[4]

Even before the music
you start to think about
this thing's limitations

Formal patterns, speakers,
and personas—
just bags of refuse
in the gutter

Strange percussion
and movement toward
—the nature of time—

In this light
every vehicle
looks like a hearse

Mentally sitting cross-legged
a cognitive posture of squatting
nope, no good

Things will
unfold differently

I think of desiccated seed pods
I think of bag worms

Hanging things

Equally spaced wooden slats
of a bench worn smooth

Freshly painted surfaces too
vibrate with menace

The disparate details
were the parts of
a new kind of
timepiece—
broken or yet
to be assembled

[5]

It's the low register
suggestion of something
subterranean
then repeated
with subtle variation

A new species indulges
in blanket renunciations

A phantom scent—
some kind of decay
to the left

Habit etches into
the surface
patterns of
imposed distance

The right hand
is not empty

At first surfaces
appear exotic
but even through
the soles of
these shoes
uneven terrain
transmits messages

This is elongation
rancid lanolin spells
the final pastoral

[6]

Fading catalog
with perhaps
the rhythm of
a heart beating:
primrose
wild thyme
scraggly hibiscus

Maps and
transparent confinement
layered traces in
pervasive wet grass

Timing on a different
larger scale—
the temptation
of repetition
forms a
familiar shape—
it is round but
not quite flush
with the surface

Close to the roadway
is confusion
but there are details—
tropical minutiae
in other contexts

[7]

On the clean
lattice-work of locomotion
unsought intensity
at the edges

Unreality burns

Small flowers persist
no one notices
the narrow trunk
of the young sycamore
at the periphery

The foundation
turns out to be hollow
and everywhere
the smell of humans
gives pause

The layer of macadam
wears away in places
the lattice-work
is still there

A wallpaper of dead vines
will not conceal the mystery
of the old cedar

In places
rebar shows through

Poor vision
traces dark shapes
they might conjure
birdcalls or
the laughter of children

Bodies in motion
bodies at rest
an in-between zone

Firs and magnolias
the painful return
of circulation

Nameless grove—
site once of rituals

Evidence like
green paint

The sudden return of
an overgrown path

[8]

Perception of time
will alter itself
of necessity
as the inflexible
will be edited out of
time's sequence

Dirt and dust
accumulate on
surfaces of
varying topography

Fantastic shifts
along the axis

Fluid textures and
the crumbling remains
of some coliseum
now a public toilet

A soiled paper boat
bespeaks the
ritual offering—
ants in ketchup
remind us of
where we stand
with the gods

There are different
types of memory

Some details may
only be viewed
through a prism

A carved miniature
left behind might
be a reminder