You and I running

to catch the train for Warsaw
_is it always later than you think?

pounding Krakow’s cobbled streets
we send up a flutter of birds, crash
their pecking order as we
strafe across the plaza, _clock 2:50,
    train at 3:00,

_the desk clerk smiled, “They always leave on time . . .”

Ten minutes

’til the tower bugler crows to flip the hour,
tribute to an ancient warrior cut down
by an arrow while he trumpeted a warning,
(but) I can’t stop to dwell on legends—fleeing
_now Hotel Elektor through an
avalanche of twisted turns, maze of
bone-bleach arched and artful architecture,

we are heavy

in our winter coats this unexpected first
warm day of spring _come home come home
a chorus to keep pace by, suitcase,
shopping sacks fat with spoils of native glass
bump hips bump thighs bang knees
at every footfall—you beside me, but ahead

sweat pops

through wool loops in your coat
perspiration pools and burns our eyes,
we shoot past cathedral gardeners,
a dirge of rakes claws earth’s dark skin,

there is panic

at the pinch I’m in, wondering will my
head burst first or heart _flap of coattails pulse
_inside my ears_ imagine gardeners gardening
open graves, turn back dank soil with that
soft-same tawny scent—
a baby’s fist

shoots up from a parked pram, suspicious men
on benches turn away, they don’t look up
as newsprint flutters in their hands,
do not look up to see us running
out of history, out of time, from salt mines
juxtaposed against this old and holy city—this

open market chokes

an entrance to the station, kiosks blur,
cabbage potatoes postcards spin, a bag
slips off my shoulder, I slow beneath a
clothesline clipped with t-shirt images
of Pope John in Small to X-tra Large

you call my name

to check I’m still in tow, SEE BEAUTIFUL
POLAND DOUBLE-TIME! we rush
the unsuspecting from behind—like cameras
strapped to a high-speed chase,
faceless backs who never saw us coming

push past

women young, medium, old parade of
Eastern Europe Costume—high-heeled shoes
sans stockings, thin dresses hammered into
kaleidoscopic swatches, Cold War Couture
they never saw it coming—we take stairs
down two-by-two,

childhood asthma flares, heart wound
too tight thumps warning notes, the
bugler crowing, Hey, your time is up!

you yell

There is our train! and like movie stars
we bound the last car’s step on cue—
a locomotive whistles,
hitches up its weight
and pulls away.
(Ritardando)

We slump against the train door facing trackward, watch iron unfurl like ribbon, refracting light from a frail and failing sun. You shake your topcoat to the floor, then laugh as I remember how to breathe. Somewhere in the race between Elektor and the station, IT passed before our eyes—the warning flash of life’s last snapshot, rumored panorama that fans out for the dead? Or was it life—chased with an odd exhilaration, that having outrun this small death, we are doomed to live forever.

(Fine)