I’ve known great happiness. “Pound” abbreviated “lb,” the word “salary” drawn from “salt.” I’ve unearthed a wealth of examples like these, shy examples that don’t want to be discussed. Some people are happy lying low. They’re happy as Cambrian-era RNA. Others shake their fists. Their eyes well with tears. Shall I crawl beneath my mother’s feet because cabbages no longer grow on Broadway? It’s Sri Lanka now but the tea’s still called Ceylon. Some elements come together to form compounds; then you can’t get back to the elements to save your life. Not without the proper, very expensive tools.
MEALS

“To be excited not only by the mind but, at last, by a meal…”
—Damiel, in Wim Wender’s Wings of Desire

1.
Wide brushstrokes are meals, black and orange and green.
They descend and encroach upon the blue limited plate.

2.
A poached egg that illuminates inward. And here on earth a light that doesn’t reach the foreground and is therefore not the cause of the colors one sees in these peaches. What is the cause? The painter’s mind, her own dual nature? Then there’s the skull.

3.
My father without his glasses? A girl reading sheet music?
Some meals are like stills from a home movie, half moving, half still. Some are as lurid as newsreels. So many different kinds of meals.

4.
Two bowls of spaghetti. One is sharp but uneaten. The other is vanishing quickly and so the mind paints over it, actively and malignantly abstracts it.

5.
The restaurant makes me ache for the wilderness because it is too exacting. Isn’t that sandwich too particular? That cutlet too resolute?
6. Yolks have cholesterol. Knowledge is elsewhere. What I’m telling you to do is make money, marry young, eat healthy meals. What I’m telling you to do has no depth; I don’t believe in these things. Where was I during the party? The back room full of violins splitting at their seams. Where were you when you should have been at work? The laundromat, watching Elsie’s potted plants shake on the spinning machines.

7. How much is intentional and how much is chaos? Eggs equal gravity. Flour equals dominant subject matter. Mustard equals the disturbance, getting closer to or further from the disturbance. Wine vinegar means that the rectangle, though disappearing, is still very strong.

8. When I paint I don’t exist. And then I eat.

9. The lines use red—a streak of sun or ketchup. I think “ordinary” people already understand this. A child: “How’d she make that scribble?”

10. Wind pushes the fork, rain sweeps away the knife. As in the development of any meal, we’re going to have to experiment. This is not the same as starvation. The children eat locusts in locust season. The parents know how much time between the bloating of the feet and death.
11. Otherwise, one can like rain, not too little, not too much. One can admire the particular green of new corn. One can send seed packets and water tanks. One can ask, all one wants, Would I share my last kernel with my neighbor?

12. One can like form or one can like chaos. A man was chosen to race against his own meal: “Go, man, go!”

13. It’s terrible to enter the mind of the hungry man. And so he recedes and the meal gains the foreground. Convenient and appealing—solid, for something so small.

14. The placement of the condiment is often a paradox.
Cuddle me, says Vastwing. Hold my hand. Give me a kiss a kiss a kiss. Cuplight dreams of burgers and soft serve. Gretchen the dog, of chewy sandals flapping on the beach. Ashes has fake passports and his girlfriend Soot has pills. She’s found her way to the tooth ministry. They protrude like horns, her teeth, twist like demons. “My teef,” she cries, open-mouthed and drooling, and the Lord hears. The Lord straightens. Mr. Torchsong beats the others, but leaves Soot alone. “That’s the Lord’s girl.” In a nutshell, says Mudgrace, there exist only four things: a piece of glass, an unspoken thought, a child, the last half of an hour. Some of them doomed, by their naturally good teeth, to be beaten. Rise wakes full of sorrow, but somewhere in heaven a spirit smiles. “We left behind the perfect things,” it says. Stop had read the book that morning, but there was no use in his crying out. No one could save him.
A can of carrots, shipped overnight to headquarters. Without peas. “Seasons greetings, carrots,” said the detective. He stepped out for a smoke. The oyster house was for sale, the cigar shop, the boat yard. The business that sold “for sale” signs. Even the criminals had gone back to the land. Before escaping, Turtle-dove made a list of her crimes. Locked doors, broken dolls, faulty DNA. She left the list where the detective would find it. There were dangers in reading such lists but he would be all right. A new kind of surgery was in the works: the heart removed and not replaced. Vessels linked in an endless loop. Oxygen waving like mad as it comes ’round the bend.

THE LIST