

Schmucky the Bait

Something isn't right.
We stalk handheld down the hall,
Careful to frame close up
So the spectacle is not lost.

Something isn't right.
Light is the toughest pallet.
But with care we can darken
Even the brightest room.

Something isn't right;
It needs the tension only
Music can foster.
We must be told how to feel.

Something isn't right.
Even the player notices,
But we know more than her
As she walks headlong—

Something isn't right,
We cannot warn her.
All that is left is to wait
And watch with breath baited.

The Edge of the World

Patagonia, land of the big feet,
Is what Magellan called it
When he was mapping his Straits.
South of Araucanía, where
The Mapuche held the Spanish
For three hundred years.

You see it in car commercials
When the SUVs drive along
Rugged American mountainsides.

A grim, beautiful country,
Windswept and dry, empty
Of crowded streets and fishmongers.
But there are plenty of sheep
And fields of landmines, so
I suppose it is not all gone.

When we stayed at the lodge
In the shadow of Torres del Paine,
The wind was always howling
Down from the mountain,
An indecipherable tirade against
Everything. It was
Worst at night, when the gusts
Would batter the lodge like
Some hungry hill creature.
The whole building would
Shudder from blow
After blow—not very comforting
For a boy scared of earthquakes.

In the day, though, these landscapes
Only exist in paintings and SUV ads,
Yet there we were, standing amidst it.
A valley home to shy guanacos, ringed by
Razor mountains and glaciers.
Glaciers! They don't have those back
North. And to the east, standing like
Distant titans in a land already replete
With the most splendid of mountains,
The Torres del Paine, namesakes
Of the Parque Nacional and its greatest
Landmarks. They were like the old stone

Gods; their very presence has an effect
On the weather, you know. Clouds
Swirl around them and the day
Dawns bright, grows overcast, and ends clear.