

Two Poems by Richard Luftig

Speaking with Van Gogh at Three A.M Outside Kellogg, Iowa

I ask if I might give him a few pointers
about how stars really don't rotate
in penumbras of color, or how his room
in Arles has such tilted perspective
that if he actually laid down on that bed
he would roll off and end up in the middle
of the floor. He says he is all ears

on the subject but I don't think
he is paying attention. He reports
that when he paints he remains
of two minds like those brushstrokes
that fly off in all directions, or knife-palette
trees that twist at the end of the fields.

I ask how he manages to get
his mulberry trees to explode
into diamonds. He smiles,
shrugs, says it is like the way
corn manages to grow straight

in rows, arms flung out,
and joyfully touch the shoulders
of its neighbors in midnight
communion. Or why gyroscopes
that circle in separate orbits realize
without fully knowing how
moonlight basks farmhouses
set miles apart, each trying to make
sense of their own spinning worlds.

Ode to Bacon

You, the most regal of meats,
cured with sweet essence
of trees: Hickory, Sugar Maple,
Applewood. Made with love by pigs
in a blanket of grease,
best wrapped and deep-fried
with Twinkies and corn dogs
at county fairs. The only thing

that makes lettuce and tomato
edible. I, who choose you
four times in the Pick-Five
breakfast at my local diner,
who put you in a blender
for my health shake, who order
you *ala mode* with apple pie.

The only true impediment I see
to a conversion to Judaism.

No, *never*, I say to the report
that people who abstain live two years
longer than those who eat you.

No, never
To two more
Agonizing,
Baconless
Years.

Richard Luftig is a former professor of educational psychology and special education at Miami University in Ohio now residing in California. He is a recipient of the Cincinnati Post-Corbett Foundation Award for Literature

and a semi-finalist for the Emily Dickinson Society Award. His poems have appeared in numerous literary journals in the United States (including the *Homestead Review*) and internationally in Japan, Canada, Australia, Europe, Thailand, Hong Kong and India.