we are the echo
kelly’s alley

he walked into the wrong alley
that was kelly’s alley
daydreaming into danger
for the day of the bully
was at hand by the broken
garage that smelled of poop
eyes opening legs like jelly
“you come back I’ll break yr fuckin’ head” backing out in terror
end of the alley in sight tremor
of hope
hunting rabbits

hunting rabbits with a .22
pulling the barbed wire apart
to crawl through
into the hilly bush
no crop no cow no farmhouse
eyes alive watching for
movement in the brush
bang, bang, got him!
got him! said Ted,
dead rabbit brown
dark blood stain
lying in the spiky grass
our eyes alive watching again
for movement in the low bush
on the line

to work the line
is to live in the mind
the body repeating itself
hand over hand over hand
the mind on weekend

to work the line
is to become the machine
feed it with bottles at one end
pack them out the other
at night grease the nipples
the bottle-washing machine
on general drone the labelling machine on steady clunk clank
we the most quiet part of
the machine each in his own
reverie of lawn or lake or love
all bodies equal
on the line
summer south

picking cherries in the Okanagan
tall pointed ladders lift you
to the long view, lake, hills,
roadway flowing with cars,
a kind of power to be so tall
in the cave of a tree, clouds
streaming over the brown hills,
you pause, for the moment, the work
on hold, of course it’s summer,
summer south, obstreperously
summer, in a place you are
and aren’t and you think
have I given god the slip
perched high in the tree
the purple cherries
bursting in the mouth
Cousin Lynda

in Vernon Cousin Lynda was on the hunt
for a hundred pounds of cucumbers
a hundred pounds of tomatoes
for dill pickles for relish
pick them herself at 45¢ a pound
to lay away the preserves
preserving herself publishing
pickles I said, you’re
your mother and she said
yes
water boy

the body of the boy leaps
into deep water    dives
under the body of water
frog boy    water boy
danger boy    no fears    mother
a blur way up there    sound
echoes in the sweet
deep water
we are the echo

the nose of the clan ringrose
is on the rampage
or the black black hair
of the kerrs from god knows
where    all the old photos
unnamed    stiff with time
or I see in the bar
an echo of doug
dead a dozen years ago
because they were after him
the gamblers    paranoia    awful
as dog piss in the snow
the collie like the collie
who whelped her all in the face
the tail markings high and low
of the dead we are the echo
this is the day nothing happens

a meeting to say we've come to the end
of the agenda for today    soccer on tv
and hotspur won    this is the day
nothing happens    listening
for the first time to a cd
by mark    this is the day
nothing happens    a son says
how his interview went
excellent    a sister-in-law
had half a lung removed
and is under morphine
this is the day nothing happens
this is the day nothing happens
to you
body idling over

I bike to the coffee shop
sun stepping in the window
body idling over
art on the wall
music on the sound system
“Oh my, oh my, why must I explain?”
the dark tenor sings girl
in a ball cap walks past
the coffee oasis
and there’s that blue sky
burning and pine trees
tall as the school
newspapers to tell of the
parent trap  Cuba’s secrets
poverty in Manila and then
I dream  body idling over
to be on the road at Hope
with all its intersections