**The scientific method**

*Observation:* One attends to what rises

a line of black earth mounds

*Previous Knowledge:* One has been told

they are the work of gophers, moles

*Curiosity:* One wonders, which

but they will not announce themselves

it’s not safe when the hawks circle

we can only go by the signs,

the earth they move. Today

one turns to the web, and learns

the mole turns up a volcano

while gophers make crescents,

capping their long tunnels

*Connections:* The stuff of science, nat

But now I am past natural history

for I see this earth black as the earth

in what is now Ukraine, the fields

north of our town, the wind

announcing itself in the wheat

The wind is a traveler --

a kilometer away, in the forest

of Elichowice, trees

have grown through the mounds

where they liquidated the ghetto

in ’43. They say the thinly

covered mounds heaved for days

*Making sense:* One asks, so rationally

Again and again, the same question

How could God stand mute

by all that death? The religious

cite Isaiah, “My thoughts are not

your thoughts and My ways

are not your ways, says the Lord”

To Job, too. Grown petulant, they ask

“OK, no God. So where was Man

in those days? Where were the sons

of Goethe, the daughters of Haydn?”

I hear them out, but they

do not speak to my loss

*What reason cannot overcome:* Somewhere

in that black earth of my Złoczów

somewhere, 78 years ago

was thrown my father’s body

somewhere there, it can’t be far

lies my grandfather Wolf

The could-have-been world left

with them, like the soul, and, as for

their dear bodies, well -- bacteria

and insects, not knowing if

they are Polish or Ukrainian

did the first work, millipedes

and beetles took over. Then

moles and voles, our successful

species, took their turn in the chain

*The point:* No, I cannot go back,

stop the bullet. Yet it’s good

this California black earth

took me there, to remember

to mourn. There is a time

for that, and the time, now,

to take a clump of the earth

my small friends dug, drier

than I imagined, to crush it

and, with the prayer of

the unreligious man, in which

the words of my children

blend with the feel of lichen

the grass bending to breeze

a time, to let the earth

run gently through my fingers.