“milk”

he knows the passing time
only by expiration dates
on the gallons of milk being
rotated.

only by expiration dates
does he know that the world has
rotated,
working fifteen hour days, seven times a week.

does he know that the world has been
changing outside his grocery?
working fifteen hour days, seven times a week,
he barely has time to lift weary eyes to the window.

changing outside the grocery,
the trees drop their leaves;
but he barely has time to move weary eyes to the window
to watch the ground slowly grow snow.

the trees drop their leaves,
and he stands outside smoking
watching the ground slowly grow snow.
his break is only five minutes old.

he stands outside smoking,
thinking of expiration dates.
his break is only five minutes old,
but he smears the cigarette into the pavement.

as he thinks of expiration dates,
the milk goes bad.
he smears the cigarette into the pavement;
he knows the passing time.