

## THIS OLD MIDDLE-AGED HOUSE

I started with the land.  
Found the shadow of the barn in composted black earth.  
The vegetable garden coughed up cows' teeth and halter buckles, Nails and  
shards.

I found where farmers had thrown the season's crop of rocks to the edges  
and then the garbage.  
I cleared away glass and garters, rusted skillets and milk pails; planted trillium  
and trout lily  
and wild azalea in the woods.

Then I tackled the house  
Scraping layers of old paint off clapboards,  
freeing gutters of clammy growth,  
Digging out rot, daubing leaks.  
I painted the doors hemlock green  
and built the steps with granite blocks from an old foundation.

But now, that it looks perfect to the outside eye, I see the layers of interior  
arteriosclerosis.  
Now must I peel away what was  
too deep to see,  
or to be seen.

If I could have, I would have started from inside out not outside in.

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