

## **Black Tide**

The ocean draws in a breath  
exhaling, choking out  
black waves

Vomiting a sticky  
soup of tar and salt  
onto pristine  
unsuspecting shores

A pipeline has ruptured  
the ocean thickens with oil  
Slippery scales stick together  
immobilizing fish  
like resin paintings

Iridescent oily rainbows coalesce  
sliding over the surface  
and garish black sculptures  
collect on the stained shore

Cormorants and pelicans cannot fly  
their feathers, now plastered in tar  
are too heavy for flight  
too heavy for life...

Plains All American  
the company that caused this spill  
wastes time "assessing the damage"  
while locals arrive immediately

Neighbors and heartbroken beach lovers  
spend their morning shoveling tar  
dressed in beach clothes, lacking protective gear  
they fill bucket after bucket with gobs of tar

Rows of these plastic orange buckets  
spread out across the shore  
volunteers refuse to leave  
while officials ticket their cars

There were earlier signs of corrosion

warnings that pipes were old and weak  
this rupture could have been prevented  
instead of resulting in a  
one hundred, five thousand, gallon leak

How does a spill appear to fish below?  
Water darkening, surface shimmering  
fragmenting their view of the sky?

Do they keep watch near rigs?  
Patrols of anglerfish warily surveying  
oceanic depths with their lanterns  
for signs of disturbance?

Do whales sound sonar alarms  
hoping that other marine life might be spared?  
Ocean evacuation isn't an option  
How can they escape the deadly black tide?

Tons of crude oil, pumped out of the earth  
eerie see-saws jamming up and down  
reaching the end of an un-renewable resource  
redefining peak oil, refusing to stop

Pumping harder still  
this process of hydraulic fracturing  
The insolent rupture  
of earth's bones

We have mapped  
black lines into the earth  
A web of impermeable  
un-breathable roads

Will all American plains  
be overshadowed by dark goop  
colors and textures lost  
beneath a mask of black?