

POETRY

Marginalia

Paul Swenson

Does the margin ail you? Scary edge of things,
where fools barely cling to normal, fail
to hug the middle. Do they bug you—out there
on the ledge beyond the pale? Ugly,

should they all at once fall off—or worse,
coerce you to rehearse a crawl toward the brink
yourself. Anxious, on your shelf of false
security, do you think of all the borders

you have crossed, from found to lost,
from large to small, from boss to marginal,
so you no longer were in charge? As the mangy
herd roared by, you ate their dust. Was it

death-lust spurred you back into the chase
to claim your place in the stampede? Bleed a little,
if you must, but from your vantage in the middle,
observe the riders on the edge who turn the herd.