

&

Ampersand

Chris Green

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Part One

Drive-in #13

Stepping Out

Give me the leaves that I have walked
and the first scent of smoke on the wind.
As the hour rolls back and brings Orion
closer, sweep with me beyond the porch,
recede into the ribs of night and stroke
those trees that shore up the stars –
scratch them until they creak and stretch
and feel the entire neighborhood
pulse and breathe. Lights pop on:
kitchens with families table-clustered,
bathrooms and blue T.V.. The fact
I could now wear a coat, draws me out
to others; it is the dryness of hands
I search for. Listen, everywhere
Orion's arrows are hitting home.

Lure, Hook and Snag

Sunday mornings, there are men who take
young sons to the river and start
tying lures, casting, and drinking beer
before the sun rises. They strap life-
jackets on them after lunch and send
the boys scrambling upstream to float
back into their arms. They tell them,
"Further. Run up 'til you hit the bend."
By then the sun has lowered over the trees,
and each boy squats alone for a moment
in the last patch of light. Dead fish drift
against the bank; unopened beer-cans float
silently past, caught in the current;
and somewhere inside, each boy feels a buckled
bridge that teenagers hurl themselves from.
Then the boy is by himself running
over the sharp stones. He will go far
enough this time, and though he can't swim,
he will paddle to the middle, further even
than he was told to go. Further than
the week-end before when he saw him last.
Past the bend, he throws himself in, lays back,
until his feet no longer drag on stones.
He watches branches against the sky sail
over. He closes his eyes to feel the wake
of passing canoes and drifts toward what waits.

¹Vent

--To my fellow poets

Have you ever smoked
alone? Have you ever needed
a minute outside,
away from your mother's
kitchen? Perhaps for a long
time, you held all
the smoke in, seeing how long
you could do it. Then at last
you blew the smoke out
like it was smoke
from your heart's furnace.
Yes, the heart
can be a closet
where we sit sweating
it out, and sometimes
to bake quietly in a ball
of flame is good. But tonight,

let us show strength and lift
these smoldering coals
out from of our chests
with bare hands.
Let's feed the flames
and let our hearts fill
the air with burning hot
laughter. Though eyes
water, no one will need
to cough because
when smoke is words
and struggle, smoke is
like light and pure air.

Tell your mom this smoke
makes you smell clean.
So let us speak now

¹This poem is addressed to a group of young men that I was working with at the Bloomington, Indiana Juvenile Correctional Facility.

of what is yours and burns
with life like nothing else.

Seen from Pottertown Gap, North Carolina

Like great green
stones thrown
from Fort Bragg,
the old B-52's
briefly borrow
horizons between
pine-barren hills,
skidding over the tops
towards some
base in Tennessee.

Dropping from dark skies
they litter the front
of every newspaper,
more grainy photos to
fill the picture
book of childhood--
like these poems fill
the air.

`Listen,' they all say.
`Believe me.'

Drive-in #13

Who cared how cold it was – it was a great idea.
A coup. His mother never came out of her room,
so from the slumber-party that night nine
thirteen-year-olds tromped ten miles down
the highway, single file through cow fields,
hands in pants, their sweat freezing in November's
wind, to find Drive-in #13 where X-rated flicks got shown.
Sneaking their way to see their dreams on screen,
they dove in mud at each bouncing pair
of passing headlights, thinking it was the cops for sure.
This was before they called their cars "Go Lucky"
"The Deathmobile," "The Turd." This was before girls
when *PlayBoy* was stolen from dads.

So they strode through calf-deep mud in tennis shoes,
joking about wind-breakers and farts, and which kept
them warmer. They pissed together off the road side.
Then it rose against a cloud ridden sky; the screen
thrusting square and dark. Not a light for miles.
There had never been a worse idea. They threw mud
and chased each other home until cramps worked
through calves. Swigging cokes, they caked
the carpet with mud, tore off their pants, and collapsed
under sleeping bags. Later one began to scream
at the cramps writhing in his legs. Others stared.
Then up-stairs, her door opened. The mother rose,
descended, and wrapped those legs in a warm towel.

A Tree for Everything

The sky burns blue over the spoked
remains of spruce-firs atop
Mount Mitchell. Valleys stretch out
like arms veined with a single-road,
but green green green. Descending
the mountain, off the Blue Ridge
Park Way, pines cycle to autumn maples,
punctuated at each turn by low stands
of pines, even-rowed sprouts and saplings
replanted to fill the hill's emptied quiver.

Before the fire that night, you follow
the flare of embers shooting into the sky,
trace their tails until they fade.
Now the pyre blows high with the wind,
and you watch the sparks flock toward stars,
pour like migrating monarchs from trees.
You watch them disappear, forsaking
your heart like loose piled dreams in wind.
So long cleared, so long contained,
now the heart lays bare for all that lands
and departs, rogue gambit of belonging.
How lucky they were to find rest
amid core-struck fields and forests,
for recall when you tried to stock this worn
spot rooted deep within. Like an aviary,
you clasped and housed all that alighted,
until your cage collapsed, packed
and overflowing. You loosed the lock,
numbered, and tagged them, hoping to track
their routes. You cried after all that left.

In your nights on the clear-cut mountain,
open the shaking barn of your breast,
let each ember alphabet that longs to ride
deep into the wind settle in its hollows
and squat on the slats of your ribs.
Yes, what rises from roost seeks only
a silent span, and without regret
spreads rumor of shelter and eventual return.

Silo

for sheila and dennis

Dennis will not climb it, for he knows the land
and the grain-elevator's tower is too high anyway.

So Craig, his nephew, and I climb the ninety-foot trellis.

It is sunset. Cars crawl along close horizons.

We hear only wind.

Four thousand acres spill out below,
and I can see the work the combine will do,
filling the silo we rest upon with the quiet
soy-beans now rising over the remains
of spring-cracked wheat.

Dim and low in the east field,
buttressed by falling
trough and stall, a cleft concrete silo sings still
of all the Angus that roamed these once pastures
now shaggy with crop.

Stone testimony of what remains,
Dennis almost drowned within that silo, engulfed
in grain at eight years old, pulled down
by a golden rip-tide.

No one could breath under such life.
Everyone acted,
opening shoots, spilling stored wheat, drinking
dust, plunging shoulder-deep to catch a foot
and drag him into the world again.

I understand why he climbed: what a place this would be
to watch the stars from, because though high up,
you know how close to the ground we all are.

Craig and I watch cars slowly scuttle dark highways,
bleeding light that barely shows the way. They move like the mines
that transverse the fields below us, delving darkness.

To the north over graded fields, puffs of dirt roll
from the dozers that level once terraced hill-side fields.

I think there is cost in claiming what does not rise and offer
itself from the ground, carving coal to light and warming the evening air.

Though we watch t.v. late into the night, what is this worth?
Last night the family gathered to watch Harrison Ford feigning
on an Amish farm to protect a witness who might help flush
out cops who kills cops. When they drove up to do in Ford,
he drowned one, opening a shutter to shower hand-harvested wheat and fill the
silo where the choking cop stood. Once stillness
descended, he dug down to claim the gun.

Our faces turn toward the sun rise soon enough.

Earlier that evening we drove past made-lakes, through flattened fields
barren of trees, laced with half-stitched low corn. We came searching
for the old Byrd farm, which always lay just beyond
the next turn of the gravel road. But the farm where Dennis's grandma grew
hides in this lack of cover: Land-marks devoured,
soil stripped and resown is not restored, and what once grew
will not so grow again. Such parring goes beyond repair.

Yet look what stands around the house below us. Full old trees shiver
and bend, unbroken, catching last sun
and waving in the late day wind.

Earlier today, we rested in the shade of those trees
and held each other up, supporting
each grief of your father's passing.

As the rafters

we rest upon quake, Craig and I talk about
how the trees would all gallop in storm,
how breaks in brittle boughs make ready new growth.

One post-storm, twenty years ago, stripping a silo that lay
bone-shattered on its side,
Dennis was caught and crushed under falling rib-beams
he sought to salvage. Restored
by hands and care of a wife-to-be, he came to reseed
the broken ground that he grew upon. It is John,
his twelve year old son who brought us to this tower;
John who had never climbed the grain elevator's shaft.
John who ascends after us now.

How pierced the ground. How grown over. How mattocks
and ploughs and bouts of anger cleaved foundations,
plucked coal, and planted rows after row.

How our hands hold and place what is ready.

How much the ground has given.

How much room has been made, how much we strip
of ourselves. How much lies in the quiet of the star-shine night.

It is not endless. If only someone could divulge the cost

of what is taken, the cost of what is given and surrendered.

All I know is this: what is planted,
what finds itself under earth,
rises toward what harvest comes.

The Only Decision

The only decision was not to die
for the winged ant
loosed from her sistered network
into the humming sky.
All she could do is jump
and fall where the wind fell.

Her digging is her prayer:
she moves with the August sun,
burning low into the land.
Already, she has forgotten her wings
as the dirt tears them away.
But then, they were transparent,
as she is, disappearing into the ground.

Too caught in herself, she does not panic.
She extends. Delves away from
the slow unbelievably high day and
the moon rising like a calligrapher's stroke
 inscribing a sleepless gourd.

And forever between what she can not witness
she fills the earth with
 the promise of an unextinguished sea.

Bouquet

It is that time of year again. On November 15th, vases will be turned over to prepare for the winter season. New season bouquets can now be purchased at the office for convenience. We wish our families a happy holiday. — Announcement From Valhalla Memory Gardens Advertised Under the Daily Crime Report, Nov 1, 1996.

1.

Valhalla keeps calling each Tuesday —
it seems a plot has been put aside for me.
I imagine the telemarketer as a Valkyrie
with long braids. Without gloss,
she explains a plot has also been reserved
for my family at, she adds, no cost.
Perhaps on that faithful day Valhalla
will trumpet, "Chris Green is Dead!"
Standard-bearing Valkyrie would surge
over the hillock, and Christ would lift
his heavy head, wink and say:
"Nachos and Beer — he's earned it."
But it's just January, the new year,
and I don't plan to kick the bucket
to be planted in Valhalla Memorial
Gardens--prefabbed flowers, mausoleum
and all. I try to be nice, but I blame her
like she blames me. Telemarketer,
we're both acting on Fate's behest.
"Why don't you use it?" I suggest.

2.

However, come June, *Vandals Desecrate
Valhalla*, is not the headline I expect.
20 American Flags Cut Down and Burned.
A group of drunk teenagers, out turning
a lark. Should we praise them as their plots
are reserved by parents and nation? Or ought
we merely to say something has failed,
failed terribly, and let down the faith filled
old warriors' widows and misled our teens
who follow what example has set.

3.

Listen, the dead talk to me all the time.
My heart and mind are packed with relics
warriors have shed in their wake: the look
on my mother's face when her vet-father
took his life, shot-gun in mouth; the angry
stare of white masks and black skins
haunting the streets. I know when the dead
aren't pleased, especially those warrior kind.
They don't let you sleep on your own time
when there's something doing that needs
being done. Yes, Valhalla rings in my head,
and I hear her silenced warriors, dead and alive,
singing with the night: Stephen Biko,
Mumia Abu-Jamal, Myles Horton, Ernesto
Rene Castillo, Audre Lorde, Leonard Peltier —
choir upon choir of those who fought
and fight against death, old warriors all.
You know them too, those crazed old lovers
of this world, resisters, buoys at the edge
of oblivion. Markers of the Come-from
and Spurers of the Go-to, this candles burns
for you, and for all those who will raise
into the next day and lay their bodies down.

To Sweet-gum Seeds

Small suns, each of you radiates
brown-spurred jaws,
each clutching what reaches it.
I stomp a thousand
many spiked-hungers on my way
to my car. Invited, the children
bunch you into balls
and adorn the rail of our porch,
which our cats, curious, knock
off and watch explode
into soft caltrop-suns
swirling the ground.

Yes, I love you who hold
on namelessly, without question,
dedicated to all who touch.

Rupture/Rapture

This wreck occurred at approximately 6:53 on the morning of January 23, 1998. Later that day, Mr. Green treated with Dr. Souheil Haddad, a neurosurgeon. Dr. Haddad performed a CT scan of Chris's head, which revealed a hemorrhagic contusion into the left temporal lobe.

– to Grange Insurance Company

On life's vast Ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the Card, but passion is the Gale:
Nor God alone in the still Calm we find;
He mounts the Storm, and *walks upon the wind*.

– Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, Epistle II, 107-110

A grass-roots meteorologist without gear,
I watched clouds rise and rinse the horizon.
I trudged through the first howl, hid my face,
not knowing how to evacuate this body,
as the dike-heart broke, hemorrhaging
dream. I gasped though flooded alveoli,
placed one foot after the next, straight-backed
as the dream-bruise grew. Nothing stood
before that heart-pond hurricane; every observation
broke free of mooring, lashing like branches.
Headlines pelted me: Kosovo, side-walking shootings
in Durham, death after highway death. Nothing
could be done: no where to run and everyone,
every storm to argue with. My dreams mingled
blood with the world's dream of rupture.
A gulf, widening, sheered threads of connection.
Friends floated away to Eugene, Lubbock, Madison,
overseas to Seoul, to Morocco – a charting of dispersal.
Each of my steps inland drug a hundred strands
whipping like hydra heads, flapping in the wind
like kites caught in trees: letters unresponded, friends left,
communities abandoned. Cat of Nine Tails,
I chastize myself into paralysis for failure,
for all the places I had not gone, for all I hid from.
I wanted loud-speaker calls of warning,
to know which way to go, but my feet were leaden.
How could I heed my heels and heart? Stunned,
I listened to resisters struggle on *Democracy Now*,
read poems about action and anger and saving,

coached new writers to act, but my own play
was darkness. Statue. Isolate mime against the raging
sky. How could I catch a steady wind, and set sail
through the dream-sea coughing in my chest?
I held a fantasy of a greater surrendering to pass,
a hope of opening through light to the seas beyond,
where I might overhear the voice within and peer
into its conversation with the world. But for now,
how could I not lay fallow in the eye of the storm?
I took the first step. A second, letting mad dispersal
whisk away breath; breath floating like seeds towards
an uncaring distance. Who knew what would grow
then, or what would carry me forward beyond
cleaving to my closedness, and standing calm
as wild wind rushed through, sweeping waves.
I learned to stand and sink, feet in sand, beat by beat.
Every heart contains what we shield ourselves from –
exposure of unrequited expanse. So I cast out, caught
fish for dinner because each heart contains all dogs'
barking and frisbee chasing, all hope, cries, and wrecks.
Watch how the hearts ride this tempest – its babble,
roars, chattering, gossip, lude interruptions, and choirs.
Listen to how the wind responds, exhaling in reply.
Love of beech, Love of beach, Love of oak;
Love of breech beseeching embrace all the while.
How to compose this world as it whirls? Let us love
every thing left strewn and smooth upon the shore.

Apricot

When I asked about the splicing of Cyprus
and Turkey's integration into the ECU,
you told me how the highways splitting your Istanbul
roared as you studied nerves knitting on MRI's –
related how its orchards seemed filled with every fruit.
So, pen glued to my palm, I report back to you,
about the sweetness gummy on my hands and tongue.
Produce-man for an afternoon, hunched in the backroom
of the Co-op, I load bag after bag with Turkish apricots.
Already my hands are sticking to everything!
And like the laborers from Turkey, I will never see
the consumers I sack them for, as once divvied,
I reseal and refrigerated them in used banana boxes.
Yet have not poems packed in books preserved the heart
of Hikmet?² Yes, Hikmet would love what clings
to fingers of nameless American women, awake early
in the morning, faces sticky with seed from across the sea.
He loved any people embracing the fruit of another.
But I am sad, Cem, because most here do not think
of those who pick this fruit, of whose hands they eat
from. The shade of the apricots, Hikmet might say, burns dark
orange like the sun-ripened skin of the laborers who harvest
them. How they, dehydrated for transport, wizen to tongues,
sweet but drying all the time; how they can come to life
in the mouth of another, because tongues with listeners
do not shrivel, cannot be shipped too far. Yes, I love all
that clasps to my hands as I mete out another bag,
filling it beyond its rim.

²Nazim Hikmet (1902-63) is a Turkish poet comparable to Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, or Pablo Neruda. for Cem, R&R, Brian, Steve and Weaver Street Co-op

Allen Street Run-off

Along the concrete embankments
of Allen Street run-off
I am shifting
through the November day,
smiling at the sway created
by some half-crazed
Buddhist who's planted
long stalked reeds
that look topped with feathers
enough to billow us all away.

It's the driest day,
and I'm roaming
through post-raking remains
of leaves – all neighborhood yards
more clear than ever
before spring's burgeoning.
My only company is a lady,
the first to hang her lights,
and an old man scraping the ground,
three whole days behind.

This quiet is like the silence
in the poems I might write
as our lives cycle by,
cycle by like Christmas-eager
knee-bent children whose feet drag
from too old dirt-bikes
as they race past
their neighbor's stone
stairs. Jenny, let our love
be simple like the way people pile
rocks into altars in every yard.
Simple like the sheer shapingness
of backs and sweat.

Here amongst the warmest
November world, waiting
for you to return, I've sought

out the beautifully fooled early
blooming elms, and I'm thinking
about all the things
we might do outside
in the warmth on a sheet, and
I'm thinking about next spring
and a future of two story
houses with fields next door.

Now listen, love,
to all the great baying ones
who greet me
from their back yards fences
as I lope by,
hands blushing promise,
on my way home.

Part Two

Hairline

The pelvis of *Australopithecus africanus*, which lived more than 2 million years ago is clearly hominid. *Homo erectus* and all later fossil hominids, including Neanderthal man, had fully modern pelvises demonstrating the compromise between efficient upright stance, bi-pedal gait and the importance of a broad shallow basin to accommodate a large-brained full term fetus.

1

Expanse of thighs easy and soft beneath,
the pelvic girdle, a fusion of three bones,
converges and fastens to the sacrum
in the rear, dwindling to the coccyx,
vestigial tail-bone. The first bone, the ilium,
named after the Roman vinegar cup, rises
above to either side, and is also called *Ala*,
wide wing of hip, the body's best bladed scoop.
The ischium, upon which falls the weight
of sitting, spills behind and below, and lastly sweet
forward sweeping pubis ramis, crested prow,
yoked by the symphysis pubis so the ring between
the bones also serves as the birth canal. So, replete,
abide a moment in this, your first, widest bowl.

Framed behind cracked glass, a photograph.

My sister's

naked torso stretches along side her
best-friend Tisa's. Two girls caught from above.
Next to my sister's straight, muscled sides, Tisa
lies wider, fuller. Canterng across both
their hips identical vines entwine,
issuing from sides and ending above dark
curls: twin tatoos they had burned into the width
of their waists in Memphis to remind them
of love and past inner beauties. Tetons to
Savannah to witness our brother's wedding,
they had just completed their cross-country trip.

This was before Tisa, pregnant, departed
for Oregon with her beau and their "accident."

When I was a child, my mother bathed me.
She clasped me between her legs, and her pubic
hair swayed over my back as she scrubbed my scalp.
We fit like vases grandmother used to sculpt:
families curved together, clusters of round
Venus of Willendorfs.

Now, hot-flashes
begun, Mom pumps in estrogen to stave off
what she witnesses: her mother's pelvis,
once pliable, wears the sheath off her sciatic
nerve, until she can barely stagger the stairs.

And I remember once in steam, after bathing,
touching the thick milk-blue marks that abounded
my mother's abdomen. Was I touching
scars? I thought I was brushing her heart.

Why hold yourself strung on your heart's tight cords
above first fact of stillness, a puppet
shrugging its high shoulders? Relax calm
and sink into your pelvis, lowest basin,
cup of self-acceptance, pivot and balance,
fulcrum of supine meetings, antechamber
to the spine's spiral case. Pause now. Consider
all who have put lip to that fluted base
and blown the back's ripe stack of loose strewn bones
into lovely floundering. Consider
whose hands will next lift this wide bowl where breath's
seeds detonate and climb from the cistern
along the trellis of the spine and ribs
like sweet-peas wild in a wet summer.

My grandmother shattered her pelvis in the storm
when her boyfriend lolled into the oncoming lane.
Yet, as she knit, he cared for her, moved in,
and began sleeping next to her. What a scam.
My prudish potter Grandmother mending under
her live-in square-dance partner's care: he hoisting
clay up her stairs.

But a year later, like Raku,
scattered into capillaries, her pelvis bears
dozens of hairline fractures. She's like the seconds
she surrenders misglazed, over-fired. Bowl
after bowl has cracked under my hands during washing.
I imagine her settling into a steaming bath,
Ray's hands grazing her hips as he runs the loofah
over what he split: her *Ala's* spiral galaxy.

The spiral outward, the moment of impact.

I recall shudders too as I opened to a lover,
like Grandma's shattered door, its glistening
paint flaking like memories of the night after
my lover quit me, when my roommate's lover's cries
sank like lances into my side, and I unable
to hide, helplessly erect, remembering how light
once shivered on a waist my wrist brushed,
exhausted bodies framed by mother's carved bed.
It is July. It is false-dawn. It is light and blood
from the window spilling the first ink of the pines'
shadow onto her lips. It is a thousand years ago,
and I don't know if I will love again, but already
I am laying lilacs on her stomach while she sleeps.

Lovely Elder, generous wide-spread corymb
for your scions, may you never slip in the porcelain
tub, its edges rushing you downward. And if
we burst sling us back into the kiln.

“That old thing?”

Mom laughs when she spots the quilt she wove years
ago draped across my bed, worn tulips and vines
still coiling torn fabric. But I haven’t forgotten
how once I found her asleep, legs washed in blood. Stains
I cannot wash out. I take you to its silk
underside.

Dear Sister – and whoever would spiral
into *shank* and *seat*, *mons* and *tummy*, convex
eminence – may you ride in the long stride of the soul’s
hammock, threshing basket of our hearts’ chaffing,
expanse of thighs easy and soft underneath.

Part Three

Moving into the World

Emergence

1.

Long echinacea stalks
waver in the barely
January gale. Notion
of strain in icy lob.
Hallowed stem,
crow's nest of cold brown
seed. Neighbor's
house across the street,
backdrop.
My coffee cup implacable.
The window before me.
Before it all.

2.

Two boys sculpt ice-crashes
with runaway radio control
cars. No one knows what they have
in their pockets. By the time
you get there, you've forgotten
why you left, and your shoes
crouch on the wrong feet at the end
of a crooning world. Winnebagos.
Plastic wind-mills perch
in garden slots. And between house
and house, coiled fences.
Spring's rolled unplanted promise.
O, sundered hands
of January's late-afternoon child,
what gravel world are you scooping
under the sun's winter arch?
Don't ask what fills you as you leave.

3.

Why not snow again?

With its plowed heaps
and ruts that dissolve with rain,
heat? Why not like the red
cardinal's grey mate extend
the handle of a buried shovel
into brief altar? Or find
ourselves hanging
from the broken ends
of gutters, ever lengthening?
Twist like banana's black peel
frozen and clenched on the floor
of the car. Yes, make
a moment to love.

4. Rough Shod

Hair longer than his daughter's,
he totes blond Breeze by her hand.
And they wear plaid. Plaid.

5. Annul

Out back beyond
jerry-rigged altars
where the ground hog
and racoons wait
for me to bring cabbage,
one snap of sticks
beneath my feet
leads to the next.

What Mom Taught Me To Carry

Not weights on my head, nor my back
straight. Not the burden of her world.
But to net with eyes the sun lispig
between the oaks. Or green surging baths
of flower leaves, casting off dependencies
to drift like foam on waves. Not huge piles
of orange Fiesta-ware plopped on my head!
But how to hold my sister's heart in my hand,
how to put mine in hers. And from my mouth,
at dawn, like families of birds, out fly
her words. Her words. Her words.

Love Poem For Lynn

I forget to turn off the lights.
I make you cold
when I should make you warm.
I consume you in a million different ways.
I live by the secrets I hide from you.
I am sprung by the darkness of your vision:
 it gives me light to grow by.
I could be enclosed by you,
wrapped inside, folded, asleep,
all the movements right ones.
I could grow into day or night.
 I grow great, deep, and
 stagnate.

We are always on the borders of places
which resist us. We stand on the edge
of the final and repeating dream
that we can never fully enter.
We never know what we are inside of,
seeing only the boarders that resist us
and keep us with in ourselves,
 even too much.

You are the edge of what I come to,
showing me how far I can never go:
even when we take turns
making the bed in the morning.

Moving into the World

At first she thought moving into the world meant having more
things living in her house – ferns, spider-plants, maiden’s-hair,
two cats, fleas, a boy-friend –
though unlike the others, he left before he died.

Then there were indigenous arachnids, mold, roaches, flies.
You can see how this went: the world moving in made for a mess. But it was a start.

So instead of vaccuming desicated leaves off her carpet, she followed
them outside, taping all that fell to the ground. Her goal?
To mark the migratory pattern of bulb and weed
of all that wandered through her tender domain,
to note the cyclitic difference between infinity and eternity.

With book in hand, she hiked the cleft dales of reclaimed trash heaps
to mark the presence of *Osumunda regalis*
which grows on the wet margins of woods. She never found any.
In April she broke sod, planted Greek basil, steak tomatoes, wild orange asters,
and composted to give worms, the juicy ones, someplace to be.

Soon there was a jungle outside as well as in.
So come May, she joined them, took her armchair into the front yard
sunk its prongs into the seepy ground.

She waved as gawking kids scattered off buses.
They waved. She watched neighbors come and go,
mowing and stowing groceries,
though never once, not once, did she see a nude.

Okay so she fucked it up. Got her favorite chair wet.
The tape didn’t hold. She put sticks in her compost.
Neighbors called the police.

Well then, she thought going into the world meant leaving it all.
She looked in the yellow pages under “Packing and Shipping.”
Oh, they had ingenious ideas for boxing her,
but couldn’t suggest a destination.

Travel companies? Their planes were all late, and
anyway, she always got there just a minute after they had left.

But honestly, she was glad, because she knew how those planes flew throught the night--
like roller-coasters that never bridge the top, straight up, clank clank, at six-gee’s and 10 m.p.h..
Just like lack of sex.

That’s when she left town, thought getting

into the world meant introducing herself to Peruvian sub-prefects and making eyes
at their sons. Time, that is, to enlarge her collection of international ocular taxonomy.
From there she'd learn about spontaneous revolution, Rosa Luxemburg,
Neo-liberal economic reform in Korea, military-
industrial pacts with banana plantations owners, etc. To get a good view
she'd climb a Guatemalan volcano
in sandals in the rain in the middle of the night
with two vacationing Israeli soldiers.
She thought that would work. And if it didn't, well,
she would cleave her heart like a potato, leaving its eyes to bud into every grotto
until entire populations depended on her narrow but hearty variety,
a variety though which would, undoubtedly, succumb
to the kisses of a Turkish psycho-linguist.
Then she would latern the sky with the rude but effective fire-works
of her loins,
and all would find their way out from famine.

But, really, there never seemed enough to go around.

How can she move into the world?
You, reader, know how to do it. Tell her how you walk the streets
assailed by the simple thickness of flowers; how in the town square
you hold a friend's hand in yours until fingers gain sight;
how once on a summer's evening, you opened the back door
and the breeze, which was all breezes, rinsed the smell of an orchard
through your hair, granting perch for all that remains.
And how, when lonely, you never forget anyone you've ever loved.

In a Wheat Field, Celle Germany

Feel the head of life
held, like a berry, in our mouths:

a berry. A berry.
Child stands chest deep in a pool
of spring wheat holding
a sprig of green
in the jump of his fingers,
spreading the seeds and their long
ends into a knotted arc,
(the back of a life diving whale)
and the child squeals. Caterpillar!
A berry in the mouth.

A berry, a berry.
Two men halt in a pine forest,
hear the creak of trees and
find two bees caught in a sweet trap
of roots and sap, two bees pushing
their way roughly up the side
batting wings against the tiny
root net.
Looking, they find only their own
tight silence waiting to burst.

A berry. A berry!
Look, the head of life
held in our mouths.
And our mouths, berries too,
hung on the end of a thorny bush:

compact, red life-seed
of what may be
we hold you in our sun-dried lips
with eyes blooming
as we are held in your mouth,

we also going to seed,
food for what ever will be.

Minerva's 90th
(Fellowship Hall, Russiaville, Indiana)

Your grandmother takes my hand and guides me past the choir pit,
past the cousins congealed from California and Idaho who cluster

in cloister far from the photographer's banister. I am tugged
around and named to all the uncles, aunts, and family friends.

Your father came of age in this church, and your grand-father lies
outside. And today, your father smiles every which way, happy

at his mother's 85th and her sister's Minerva's 90th party. Unknowing,
this event is my picture book, my opening. Your face lurks everywhere:

a smattering of noses, a lock of curled hair, and blue eyes all around.
On the way home you told me story upon story of the entangled faces,

decades of feuds and grief, explaining your bearded cousin's silent eyes.
Beyond the distances and relations yoked by the matrons' birthdays,

we and your brother Luke seek recess, driving out to your uncle's farm
where your father grew up. Acres of corn arc squarely away to either side.

But things have changed—the barn from the grainy photo where your father
squats between his parents atop a pickup as a child is gone; instead, llamas

in stalls seek consortion. Luke shyly cowers from their white humping.
When we return, great-aunt Minerva bequeaths her birding binoculars

to us in celebration of our wedding to be. I am new stock in the field
your father fled from but always returns to; the field in which you feel

all too planted. What am I here? A face following you? The next cycle?
Through the glacier leveled fields on the way home, your aunt's pale

binocular case perched in your lap. What have you been given to see?
After cake that day, we and Luke wander the forest of granite grave

stones outside Fellowship Hall. We search for the oldest dates,
tracing the remnants of lime-faces on the field's far flanks and recesses.

The three of us, enwrapped in the sun, read from the clusters of dates
how eleven children died in a month's space in 1871. Nothing has changed:

on our fridge, pictures of friends' and families' babies crowd the freezer
door. Only upon arriving home did I notice the magnets holding them up:
Blue Cross/Blue Shield Insurance, ValueJet, a skull and crossbones
covering BOYCOTT FOLGERS: STOP EL SALVADOR DEATH SQUADS.

The names on the stones before us now are just etchings, and the time has come.
As we work our way back to the family packed basement, you sock

me when I suggest to Luke that we adventured to our local cemetery
in celebration of our first night together. But he knows already as our eyes

speak what we have shared. Then rushing past us from behind a worn
stone, a giggling toddler hide-and-seeks into her father's waiting arms.

Morgan-Monroe Indiana State Forest, October 1996

Lives whistle like leaves in prayer.
Count them falling
from the trees. Who knows
where the path descends to.
Begin anywhere, write it
in the air.
There is always a remainder,
a witness who hungers.
You cross the shadows of trees
as they shy open
ground to autumn light.
These gifts waited for you in falling.
Webs broke, and hung
on your glasses the pull
of scrub-briars' few green leaves.
Sudden reveling in light.
If you stop speaking, will you lose
everything? Prayer of wind.
Words tangled in fallen foliage.
 Few leaves catch the sound of passing
 better than many.

Shorn

I love the legless.
I love they who sign.
I love she, ill, at home,
a voice calling me
over the phone like an angel.
Look, my ears open.

Shorn from the world,
our words already
translations
of the infant expanse,
soundings of transience.

What is this
extremity which
through grief
has brought us
together, harnessing
the drives called joy,
sacred surge
of touch, expanse
of finger on thigh?
How can we open
each intention to
the propelling inward angle
from comrade sails?

Truth spoken
about night's aqueducts
chokes us
into stuttering.

I have been crying
for years. Look
how quickly I shut
my doors: my staunch
questions, my insoluble
fear, the flick of belief
a rumor; a pressed lip.

Those who would teach
me to breach
the incalculable coldness;

Those who would sire
the lace of light, burning
loop, and vocalize
disability toting us hence—

Place your hand here.

Drenched
opening vault

of the relational sky.

Field Trip

Barbara, leaving the teens to their own,
we walked toward the trees marked
"virgin wood" on the map

and took the long way there.
We stopped at sunny cemeteries, wild
flowers, and found a cave where light

cooled over a river that streamed
from the earth. Perched
in the quiet alignment of its mouth

of stone, we felt with faces and hands
what the coolness proposed.
So we paced late toward the promised

stand of trees and had to turn back
to the parking lot just in time to meet
the clustering kids who were doused

from delving up the river into the cave.
One had lost his watch, though it shined,
under a stone. Why did we step

toward trees we had never seen?
Maybe we were searching for what
had not been cut, whose presence

we feel and traverse each day. Even
unshorn trees will not wait. Eternity gives
and flows, but maybe the trees grow

in us, or we grow on them, and our lives
are leaves that gather the leeway of light,
that cluster to nurture what we cannot deem

but feel deep within us. Piled on board
the bus back that afternoon the kids
were joking, tossing hair, smiling,

and swapping stories. The wind blew
everyone's hair dry, and they were open
to each other's light.

They felt the wonder of sap
within their veins and fed the roots
that support us all.

Fire Breathes

like all women
I love in their flare
and ex-

uberance. Smoke
clouds the horizon; O the glare
from their far

raging eyes! Some mornings
I wait
on my porch

to hear the news,
to see what country
they've left me for

this time.

Maybe
I'll have their children—

mad kaboodle— and just let
the women come and go,
seeing as how they come

back now and again.
None do. None of 'em.
I want love

like women who love
the swirls of wild pro-
crastination,

and I love those who leave
their own lives
in a flash because they

are the ones who live
satisfied entirely
with where they

aren't because they chose
to be here: their life.
All the women I love

burn with fire,
and their smiles
would strike you dead

with desire wanting
at that moment
you as bad as

they want
cascades and sun
in their hair.

That Nameless Day

Staring at the fountain, which I
finally forget to call a fountain,
I will die nameless on a day
When everyone forgets to speak.

It will be the day the letter
That never arrived keeps not
Arriving for the someone who holds
That name and waits by the door.

On that day Mom will not know
Who to call, just that she dials.
I will be happy answering,
Knowing that no one is there.

Fountains that day just reflect light.
Coins inscribed with my name
Will skip over the surface and sink
On to the pile wishers toss in.

Paging through the telephone book,
finding nothing, Bill Collectors
would not say, "He's moved away."
No one will say anything at all.

I will leave behind my bag
Packed with receipts from every store
I visited. Instead, I'll carry
The world in my lunch with some chips.

When everyone, quiet, listens,
Forgetting will be like taking
A bath after a weary day.
I won't mind taking out the trash.

As the forgetful wave goodbye
To no one, ponds of grief will fall
from palms cupped too long.
Flocks of shame will take wing.

And on that day that does not exist,
When you pop open a nameless
Beer knowing it is cold and good,
Then everything will come to pass.

In celebration, the dead will keep
Not turning off their alarms.
All over, they'll wave at no one,
While the worms replenish the ground.

Part Four

Door To Door

Whereof one cannot speak, thereon one must remain silent.
--Ludwig Wittgenstein *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

An indigestion is an excellent common-place for two people that never met before.
--William Hazlitt *Literary Remains*, 'The Fight'

Door to Door

Missing the Cracks

Soggy, bug-eaten, & singing, one summer
I canvassed as an Eco Avon-lady
for the Hoosier Environmental Council.
I learned which lawns spurned all calls
& when to prance through grass clippings.
Rapping on stoops, I unfettered enclosures;
I crossed barbeque borders of smell.
 Whose knock do we wait for?
 Whose knock do we dread?
Remember after your first horror movie
what it was like hearing a noise
& scavenging through mom's utensils:
it was fun to fear what lurked unseen.
Now, just down the street, a realtor
scuttles ahead of me, jamming
his card into every home's
front door, capitalizing on local loss.
Ranging behind, I stuff them in my boot
for pilgrimage is taking sight
& bowing before each other's shrines.
All rope-skippers miss the cracks
as their mothers fix dinner, commonest
of divas. So much passes us by.

Labyrinth

Depressing door-bells crusted with paint,
I spoke through alarm-system stickers,
my words moling through its Bermuda grass.
My image wound its way through mazes
of glass & screen & bar-strung windows.
White-washed women wavered
backward, retreated & resealed
their thresholds without a word.
I felt my bones hanging around me,
bent like black-eyed susans, broken
like cone flowers children had rushed
through. What field is it we are growing in?

* * *

Invitation

Child nested in his arms & a smile
of oil smeared on his shirt, a young man
answers, inviting me into his duplex.
Our talk was open & straight,
calming I think after his ploughing
home from work, dodging drivers
who jostled on packed roads.
There were too many flashing faces.
Our mutual consideration lingered
long into his night as he bedded his child,
snapped off his lamp & stretched
into sleep. The ceaseless work of care.

Five Minute Cardiologists

While driving out to canvas, middle-aged
black men instructed the teens on style –
how to leave hunkering & inhabit a smile.
Ex-marines, hippy girls, writers
who needed cash, lawyers-to-be,
and teachers off on summer break,
we register at the sheriff's office & burst
onto back-road towns conversing
in every direction. Down each block
we sought to unite those who believe
in the sanctity of front yard trees
with the plight of duplexes peeling
with lead paint on the other side of town.
Daunting "NO SOLICITING" signs,
we infused gated communities,
to jump-start the flow of what had stilled,
for porting the news of needed action
is not transgression or infringement
but unsnarling the separateness of inner
& outer worlds. At nine we gathered
on corners, quiet and half-eaten
by mosquitoes. As our van shuttled
home through the night over corn-roads,
young women with hair like black
flames flaring under their arms
sang Coltrane's "A Love Supreme,"
adrift in action adrift in their lives.
Mist swirled around the van's waist;
The moon lit the sea of stalk-high fog,
corn-ears unstirred, like island totems.

Windward

Droning with the buzz of central air,
Windward Drive had well-kept tract
housing without a grown tree in sight.
When doors cracked, mothers' bodies
hemmed in escaping coolness & children:
from the background, t.v. stories coated
the air like oil spilled on drive-ways.
Yellow hampers of day lilies
hung in humidity's shadow. From one
unbolted door, grandmother smells
eased out, mixing with lavender
potted on the porch. Rasping
curtains aside, she took the time
to table herself & talk. "Moved-up
To Windward from the west side,
Been around here six years I guess."
But she 'retired' as her factory shut down.
Her granddaughter cut the lawn
with an electric push & though things
have never been together, we talked about
things falling apart. Uncloistered,
she will rage given the facts & a way.

Peace be to the patient who provide;
& dark dogs rumbling behind fences;
peace to the flower gardens, roses,
& peace to the red-faced confronter,
clutched beer crumpled in hand.
Peace to the dirt-covered children
shooting me questions all the while.
In reply, I request a glass of water
from their dad who's grilling out,
sharing, 'Grace is some clean water.'
How connected our paths. Like aloe
shoots rooting in light & water,
heart soak this sprig of coal,
& strata by strata bud the seedling
mountain pulsing in your breast. Feel
breeze wind through long standing firs.

Chime

Resting your forehead against just
stacked boxes, something long
forgotten chimes. You have returned
to wrap your parent's things & send
them along. Back after ten years
to East Tenth, its air-conditioned chill
& the smell of your childhood. Now a shell
that hosts your brief return – shelter
from a demanded divorce, from your five
year-old's crying, from the foreclosing
of your four-month bank-teller job.
Then again through the post-work hush
of darkening-day, the bell rings,
its long chime climbing the hall,
decanting memory after memory. Unable
to find the light, you shuffle forward,
feel for & unlatch the front door,
flipping on the outside light. Late
twilight heat & asphalt steam
from the recent rain enwrap you.
Clip-board in hand, a young man
presents his charts & tells his story
about staving off derogation.

Then you tell yours.

Canvas

Each day we work to raise
the sails to harness a thousand breaths.
We want to blow coal-dust back
at those claiming to export 'pure'
electricity. They never told of stuffing
their soot into strip-mine pits. Hard-
metals leeching through limestone over decades
into the common wells of families choking
on dust and unemployment. One breath
at a time, we work to call voices to gale,
stirring currents of conversation, dusting
the rooms we all live in.

* * *

Unkempt grass & garage full

of fishing poles, eyes blister blue,
how halting he was, thinking me
yet another time-waste salesman. Name
blazoned on his unbuttoned shirt, his chest
buckles forth, wide & sad.
Take comfort that even the most brusque
listen for a moment, as you both breathe
in evergreen needles that litter the lawn.

* * *

Last of the house-call kind,

that summer we were threads stringing
driveways like beads on the bare necklace
of the world. Waiting to see what
would open, what night would allow,
we glided the lamplight of your street
like the fire flies that children chase.

Entreaty

As late summer rain patters
the pavement, I shelter under a murky
awning. Gutters trickle; rise
to streams, then rush. With talk-glazed eyes
I listen, lost to its running. Papers
whirl in the eddies before the storm
drain draws them under ground.
Eyes all around, stone squirrels adorn
this porch parapet, delight hunched
over banks of forgetmenots. Who
are the flowers for, if not for you?
I ring the bell & darkness carries
the tremor into the unseen depths.
Curtains sway inward against the rain.
The chime grows mute. Then from behind
the stricken porch light, the sudden
consternated tweaking from an unnoticed
nest is a note of solace. All the time
it comes back to touching what is before me.

The Last of the Day's Door to Door

The grandmothers, lined in yellow light
pooling from the window, swing
on their swing. Just beyond the darkening
porch, boots set aside, I walk the blue lip
of their lily pond covered in cool plastic.
Shadow fish dart through algae
& lily pad; pump-cycled water sings.
I speak with them as I pace the pond
& holding each other's grey braids
they reply in step. The last loose
light of dusk curls around my tread,
buttering bare toes & drifting
fins of goldfish. A drop strikes
a circle. A second. Then circle after
circle horizoned by dimming trees.

Part Five

Jilt

It's a long high
way, and lights sour
at the edges
of gas
stations. It is
my hand
here blocking
the stars. It has
always been
October
by this road
rushing by. My own
feet sliding
on the shoulder.
The road
that stretches beyond the hollows
of perspiration glues
together shadows
from every passing.

It is a highway in no
atlas, and I don't
know
what dropped me
out its door to end
here. The moon
has no face,
looking for a split
in the road.

I'm sticking my thumb
into the dark.

I'm going to see
what stops.

Paper Thin

Leaving, I leave you
poems by Komachi; how distant
are we even now,
our two faces pressed against
her paper-wall from either side.

(After Ono no Komachi)

Tributaries

As if to live were not
Following the curve of a planet or controlled water
But a leap in the dark, a tangent, a stray shot.
It is this we learn after so many failures. . . .

– Louis MacNeice from *The Autumn Journal*

Already I am crouched over the lip
of a limestone out-cropping.
Gentle rapids loose-litter the rocks,
& the mid-November sun catches
the last yellow in the leaves.
In the distance around the bend,
kids are tossing rocks in the river
with shouts of 'Wow!' (so close
seeming to shouts about sun-gliding
snakes on rocks), their parents sweetly
hollering, "Hey, Guys wait up!"
And who knows what lies under the leaves
& how many times I have looked up
seeing a tree I mistook for a body,
seeing a body I mistook for a tree?
My reverie collapses as the crop
of children come rushing past, parents
answering questions from far behind.

As I climb up clattering stones
of a dry tributary stream bed,
I gather each twig of light that strikes
me like straw, mounding them
in the middle of my heart-field that is never cleared
of its stones, or weeds, or water.
Leaning over a quiet pool
caught from the last rain,
I feel your butternut breath,
the scent of you still on my fingers
mixed with moss and old cedar.
Curled yellow-orange leaves
rest with light on the surface
of this limestone looking glass,
even my breath enough

to knock them back. Crossing
from shadow to day,
four small trout dance in and out
under the over-cropping.
I love the November light striking
your hair, splayed against the shelter
of my mother-made autumn robe,
your wetness another river
holding reflections of what passes.
I remember what it was I left to find.
Like poultice, walking a rock strewn
path draws my fear and failure out,
and all the democracy of light
seems possible next to the barkless tree.

Jilt

1.

I know your heart. You've shaken more
than one night when I was not around. Me too.
I love all you bring with you, abandon
and fear. How little's been uncovered.
How lonely we've both been. Come over.
I want you in my bed, in my arms. I want you
reading under my light. I'm saying let's just go
for coffee. Afterwards we'll walk and hold
hands and be tender. Tomorrow
night I'll fix you lentils, red and organic.

I haven't seen you in weeks.

2.

I want to call when I should not,
knowing that when you answer you will just say
that you have been taking care of some things,
maybe remind me that you love me.
Keep me on the hook.
I go through stages. Say I've left it all.
But when you ring from out of the blue
do I let answering machine handle the call?
Panic, how can I not abandon everything?

3.

I know what men make you represent:
the lawyer from Oregon
who said, "Marry me,
I've got the house all picked out."
Or the fifty year old owner
of *The Santa Clause Supply Store*
who called you into his office
and told you that he loved you,
said he'd leave his wife. You quit

that day. *But I'm different.*
I'm not like the guy from Iowa
who swang his curly black hair,
trod corn fields, promised to visit
now and then on long weekends.
He changed his mind,
I'll stay the winter with you.
You both knew better. At some point
doors shut which you wanted to stay open.
You said, "I've got my own life to lead."

4.

Look, I know what you do to these men.
How you open their fears in them.
What you and I have, it's dangerous and won't
let us be. I know it's been hard.
The first abusive boy friend,
the alcoholic father.
Same ending every time.
But something significant has passed between us.
We can barely stay away from each other,
and have come together at the worst of times.
Don't leave me for that. Listen,
even as you told me you *weren't ready*,
that you *just couldn't*,
you drew me out like cellophane,
wrapping everything and left the world
air-tight. So I spend my nights
driving too fast on back country roads.
The same story, everyone always asking you to stay.

5.

I know you've got places to go, agendas.
You won't come knocking at my window.
And why stop at this heart of prop?
It won't do either of us any good.
Tonight, I don't want any work.
I leave it on the table for someone else.
I drink and read a book under a lamp.
Maybe I'm the shoulder *you* glance back over.

Maybe I'm the salt on *your* tongue.
I don't want what you inspire.

Finding the Voice

I come howling the self,
leaping past the
last ruffled bed of refuge.
My looking flutters.
Eyes attract the
night like moths,
leaving darkness begging.

I hear only one voice of the
simplest blackness
and dream of light.
I hope to saturate the air,
precipitate her wide-hipped silence
like an outline of fog
against a city and
whales that live in clouds.
I loosen my views to flap in the
air, some blood-tongue that bows like
lotus and begs this January morning.
I am begging the small god
who knows the branches of
downtown park oaks and
the ape waiting to sing.

The night is a hooded land:
each tree a ballerina,
each car a magic rock.
I wait out the moon
and watch a dog trot
into its alley
of mist and weave.

I hear only one voice
then none.

In Praise of the Ampersand

Pregnant & peering over her shoulder,
she perches firmly on the page,
blows her raised hands like a horn
yoking one stone blunt word to the other
until, together, they break into flower.
Shepard's crook of the wayward,
underlying syntax of unified field,
what craftsman set your Gordian coil
curving on itself? Retread mobius,
Ampersand, you are a motherly ideogram,
heavy with transference to the next
silence between. Great equivocator,
& causeway of connectedness,
you are the type-setter's sweet cello,
saving space & drawing all together,
soldering each fragment of colored
glass that together construes the scene
when lit with outside light. How easily
we skip by you as you affix clouds
against the sky of the white page.
Hell, I know a guy who branded
his forearm with her note, always
ready to straddle on to any next ecstasy,
as stable and open as your gothic cathedral.
I walk your line backwards into the night.

Airlifting in the President of Grandmothers Over the Curtain of Stars

Setting up, Nigerian troops climb the stairs, scavenging petrol for Chevron. Yet upstairs
At the ArtsCenter, we don't rock out on the t.v. that unaired soiled well. Look
The president of grandmothers has been airlifted straight-in to the class introductions.
We all sit on someone's immediate left, and yield oil hoping to kindle people who live.
All day I have been taping "Ozymandias" to bursted pipe lines, learning to
Provide potable bedrooms. Even as we walk percentage and government and oil, we come
With forks smooth in spirit-hands. Forks to pin notes to our boards riddled boards,
Notes about reminders of cartons filled with the breath of those who will see
Through cartoons about Niger Delta Republic. Let us learn response in mutual creation,
Listening to live up to one another, and not hesitate to talk back. The young women
With brown hair writes four barrels per day and at the end of class I photocopy
All we wanted to break away and follow. We teach and play beyond our shapely guilt boxes
Even as curfew draws over oil drilling in the region, draws over the curtain of Stars,
and those soldiers who have slammed on the Niger Ijaw's town. Separated,
We too sit and write in the delta, a dusk-to-dawn sweet honey in the piles of paper,
Scratchy-carpet hearts hoping to have quiet in the young morning, hoping to help those
Who need water and electricity and cold coffee cups and bug stickers.

Home, I climb the stairs.

Against Light, Red-leaf

It was too early to put the visors
down, and now around the curve,
past the deer sign, the first light
calling red out of the trees, the sun
licks at the mist, and I begin thinking
of your lips, yes, and I'm waiting for the right
song to come on the radio, and
now dense fog on the long straightaway
and I think of friends lost in Oregon
and shapes in the mist, which
the sun still hasn't burned through,
and I don't know what is rising out
of me to fill the hollows to either
side of the way, and maybe every word
recalled and each sound and memory of hips
whirls out in response to the slim
bodies of the trees barely seen through fog
and strives to touch their firstness like lips
brushing against the tumult of things
in me and things passing and what is
exposed in the fog and autumn blue is
how all of my heart is pouring out
into the wind like smoke from a window

and now even your lips are gone, the music
done, and maybe every word and thought refers
only to this namelessness, and in the cold wind
from the window no language can even begin
to say what is happening to my face
and how I let the morning sweep it off
like that moment something inside shrugs
to huff off the layers of images I postered
on walls to remind me of who I have been

and maybe by some first glance I slip
free and terrified into awe before someone slaps
names against light, and red-leaf, and lips,
and then through the last bank of fog
I am raising my hand toward the morning,
wind washing off my face, the sun full and bare
in my eyes and it is open, open,

and I do not know what carries the world
or who I am when at last all images
cease and still the morning sweeps me on