

# Walking Together What Remains

by Chris Green

*For Jenny*

Z•A

2002

Press

## Acknowledgments

“Forward” originally appeared in *ACM: Another Chicago Magazine*

“Hairline” originally appeared in *Midwifery Today*

“In Praise of the Ampersand” originally appeared in *Pudding*

“Old Ladies Who Drive Caddies” originally appeared in *Town Meeting*

“Leaving you, I leave” originally appeared in *Black Bough* as “Paper Thin”

“The Only Decision,” “In a Wheat Field,” and “Snaking the Drain” originally appeared in

*The Cold Mountain Review*

“The Rake” originally appeared in *Minnesota Parent*

“Sixty Eight” and “Answering” originally appeared in *Melting Trees Review*  
as “Sixty Eight”

“Schema of Memory, Metaphor of a Dog” originally appeared in *Artful Dodge*

“Walking Together What Remains” originally appeared in *Born Magazine*

“The Year My Father Turned 50” originally appeared in *The Hopewell Review*

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# Walking Together What Remains

## 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—  
their creak and stretch the entire  
neighborhood's pulse and breath.  
Lights pop on: kitchens with families  
table clustered and TV blue. 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.

## 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 was 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 cannot witness  
she fills the earth with  
the promise of an unextinguished sea.

### 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 windbreakers 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 upstairs, her door opened. The mother rose,  
descended, and wrapped those legs in a warm towel.

## Answering

Rain pounds the flat roof,  
herald of early July darkness.  
A covey of quails drag  
into shelter below the window.  
A monk in jeans holds his hands  
over a hotplate, basking  
in the smell of unsinged Rice-a-Roni<sup>1</sup>.

Amid the wreck of books and paper,  
barely stirring in the cool breeze,  
letters lay piled. On top a news clipping,  
Berrigan confined six years for drenching  
draft cards with pig blood in Baltimore.  
And just under it, "I'm one of your fans.  
I8m (Ops! I think that was supposed to be I'm)  
16 ½ years old so if you do answer do not go  
too far above my head. O. K.?"  
And a reply already begun, "Dear Disaster. . ."  
Once opened could he not answer what called?

Windows ajar, storm winds roll in,  
flattening surrounding fields of wheat,  
scattering stacked letters.  
Brilliance. A boom and crack. Silence  
and shadow. The bulb had burst,  
showered shards at rest on the splayed journal—  
"In eight weeks I am to leave. . ."  
Pleasant yield to the beckon  
of that reeling world,  
Merton would venture to Bangkok.

---

1. In October 1968, Father Louis (Thomas Merton) was allowed to leave Gethsemane abbey in Kentucky to take a pilgrimage to Buddhist monasteries in India and give a paper to Asian monastic leaders (from all religions) called "Marxism and Monastic Perspectives" in Bangkok, Thailand on December 10, 1968. Bathing after he had given his talk, Merton was electrocuted when he touched an electric fan.

## In a Wheat Field, Celle Germany

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

a berry. A berry.  
A 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 whatever will be.

## Sixty Eight

### 1. (Lexington, Kentucky)

Storms would roll. Beneath turning  
leaves and bleak summer sky,  
you walked home from class in an orange dress.  
Seven months pregnant, hair barretted back,  
you grasp the gold knob and crack  
your apartment door. Held heat budges  
past you. Dropping your bag, you sigh,  
pleased to have a few hours before  
your husband and his live-in brothers  
reel in to see what you have cooked up, a few  
hours before heading to work and proofing  
copy deep into the well of night.  
Parting windows to leech the mug,  
you peel off the sweat-soaked slip  
that had roiled up over your bigness  
as you struggled down the auditorium aisle.  
Stares met you as you set yourself straight.

Settled on the porch, changed and loose, you strip  
and sand dresser knobs you repaint with Raggedy  
Anne-and-Andy faces. You joy in preparing  
for whoever lies inside—an hour of silent scrubbing,  
tracing the first fine lines, eyes and smiles.

Then a cool breeze, first far roll  
of thunder, and under rain squalls  
you rush the blaring faces into shelter.  
Dress plastered to stomach and breasts,  
rain runs dark down shut windows as you hang  
over skillets, mixing salt into rice and peas  
await for everything that was to come.

2.

I asked what you had known about politics  
the year I was born when the Temptations cut  
“Ball of Confusion”: Prague Spring. Kennedy  
and King. *Hair*. The Chicago Seven. Tet.  
“Nothing,” you said looking down. “Nothing  
at all. . . I was pregnant, working, in school,  
fixing meals for your father and his brothers.”  
I too cast my gaze down, having summoned  
you to the pool that entangled your reflection.  
Do algae strands cling to her face? That young  
woman whose closed countenance and cries  
we still swim. Mother, tell me your story  
of sufficiency and worth. Your words part  
of the great darkness I am just learning to see.

## Dragon Dreams

The child dreams a dragon  
who rides a full-recline  
Israeli bicycle.

Blue and green, eager  
to get the feel of his wings,  
the dragon comes to fetch

the boy from the schoolyard.  
He unfolds another bike.  
They ride away clad

in safety helmets. They glide  
by star-gazing denizens gathered  
on platforms, grazing the sky.

Dark-sheened young women  
(whose woven dresses roll  
into desert sands) smile.

They pedal past undying  
brush that coats all the level  
land woody-stalk green.

Soon, along the river, the ever  
present river, they reach  
a dragon's golden flank,

where a tall woman waits.  
She climbs the Gold's graceful  
legs, sits astride the neck-saddle,

and they are off, hair  
and tail lashing behind.  
Dropping bikes, boy and beast

break into air, filled with sweet wanting.  
Who knows how far they will go,  
but they are flying still.

## The Year My Father Turned 50

my mother claimed he hated  
her for losing a child twenty-seven years  
ago, and I knew for the first time I wanted  
that—a child—wanted to replay the game I'd  
lost the first time through.  
The year my father turned fifty I  
hung between 18 and 32 at half his age,  
entered my third year of post-graduate education,  
had two cats, had lived with a woman three years,  
had left her. The year my father  
graduated with an MSW, I discovered my first gray hair,  
realized if I were him I would have been  
one and working full time for the last seven years.  
Valentine's day, it struck me  
that my mother never cared  
about things falling apart  
besides relationships and that the best secrets  
I had ever kept were left on folded notes in desks.  
When Dad hit 50, my kid sister  
dropped out of college and danced at lesbian bars.  
I visited her during Thanksgiving, we danced  
all night and giggled about sex  
until she told me how hard it was for her.  
By my birthday that year I had stopped  
attending political meetings, mailing  
pamphlets, marching, carrying posters and caring  
about paper or plastic. The year my father turned  
50, I apprenticed myself to a suffering tree  
where my dog was clobbered on the highway.  
Her pelvis shattered, I put her to sleep,  
buried in black plastic. That was the year  
he forgot to call, and I realized nothing  
could be held together by wire forever,  
but for a while, for a muffler say, it would do.  
It was then I learned to drink from a coffee cup  
molded for my grandfather's hand  
and what I thought I could once burn out  
of me stumbled back as a hitchhiker  
I picked up in Gnaw Bone, Indiana:  
he squinted at me, asked me for a smoke,  
if I knew God's Word, and did I want to burn  
a joint. Driving down back roads,  
it came that way that year, for what it's worth,  
one hitchhiker's averted *thank-you* after the next,  
my own mumbled after I'd gone.

## Snaking the Drain

In the night after I have spent the day  
dropped to my stomach, the cigarettes burn brighter  
across the street as the bodiless voices breathe.  
The heavy screens around the porch,  
not enough to keep out the exhaust, block the stars.  
The street lamp brings dimness from darkness,  
and from somewhere, perhaps from the sewer,  
comes the smell of river.  
How did I arrive here—  
this place of bread twist-ties, tampons and grease?  
I live among the pipes that bring  
in the clean water and carry out my shit.  
My mother first brought me under and pointed to the darkness.  
It did not welcome as I started into it.  
Tomorrow or the next day I will go there again.

Beneath the house there are no voices  
and the walls cling to themselves like yogis.  
There the darkness became my portrait  
as I crawled and scraped in it,  
carrying wrenches and wires, trying to see into the cracks.  
Over the surfaces of pipes and foundations  
I came to know myself  
as someone who cared about where they lived,  
someone whose hands could take apart and put together:  
this is not only a cold storage place for old beds and rotten books.  
I stop and breathe.  
There is the light smell of clothes worn one day  
too long and then worn again. I would rather spend a day  
in this moist crate.  
Old people without teeth, like my grandmother,  
are what I have time for now.  
Mortar and rust, the smell of mold:  
I take all this into myself.

Under the house I keep myself from saying extra words,  
though surely this would be the place to say them,  
where they might be preserved,  
where there would be nothing to compete with.  
We all live under someone else's name. Trap or shelter.  
Ten years ago Bob Marley died of cancer  
and under the house I could wail out a few good songs.  
All the time I find proof that devotion is not crazy,

like the mad gutted church in Germany where shattered baroque statues  
lean two hundred feet above the ground  
and now they sell wine in the basement.  
In mine, I just keep my pipes clean.  
It takes nothing to put your mark on this world.

## Rock Garden

Connie's short, Chinese. The house is made of cinder blocks, the yard overgrown with many flowers. The rent is too high, but it is August and I'm happy to have found it. When I come to sign the lease, Connie explains that she has lived here for ten years and takes me out in front of the converted carport, now a carpeted den. Before the den's false stone wall, a few large brittle sections of slate are scattered over a ten foot rectangle of rocks. "Do you know what it is?" She does not let me answer. "This is my rock garden." In a few days I will find her old passports—smiling woman—find her thick Chinese translation of the Bible. A newspaper from Beijing trails behind her for months in my mail box; I parcel them in string, send them along until one week they stop. I find charts penciled on door frames, *Ming 5'4" April 24 1993*. Ten thousand pebbles, a few weeds. She looks at me and asks, "Do you know what it is?" I answer, "From under the house when you built the den?" "Incorrect, but not wrong." She pauses. "This is my rock garden." Again, "Do you know what it is?" "Rocks?" I answer, stupidly. With a shrug she says, "A river." After another pause she continues, "You must know this. It is beautiful to me. The long rocks break easily." She points at a broken piece which had overhung the middle, but there are many broken rocks. "Lee climbed on them," she says following my gaze. Every night she pulls stones from her heart to pave the way. *Lee 4'7" May 16th*. For the next three months I discover rocks stacked into little piles—in closets, in cabinets. I will kill crocuses, Asian poppies. Like a salamander below a reed, she perches before me on the edge of old stones which must be cool to her bare toes. She looks at me with consideration. I imagine her, like my mother in our old garden, on scuffed knees culling blooms into a crumbling river not as beautiful as she would have thought. Every Saturday her children have skittled over the rocks piled here as if a powerful current rushed below the pebbles where crocodiles and piranha live, where if they were to fall, they would surely be caught and swept farther from land than they ever dreamed. Ford between lives. Sunken cairn. Then there is the bottom. And the river is where the river has moved: through Saturdays before her husband left her, when the kids were too small to destroy or help in her gardening, its green rush and glimpse. I jump on to the middle stone and smile as if to say I understand. She scowls, holds out her hand.

## His Cat's Castrations

I have neutered my two cats—paid the vet to scoop their just ripe balls from a small cut she made in their scrotum. Companions for life, they stare now through the window at some guys around an open hood down the street who play pocket-pool and gab while they poke the engine. The neighbor's screens pump Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggy Style*. It is spring. My cats sniff at strange odors they once sprayed over bushes and waged on neighborhood gardens. Red slits well like two vulvas on shaved sacs. The Humane Society thinks I'm one good guy, and I won't miss those midnight prowls when they proclaimed virility, caterwauling. No kittens. No fighting. But fleas remain, bite, and I scratch all night as I recall high school's most glorious moment—the goal I, a nerd, kicked during gym after I raked the soccer team captain who had leapt up and landed on my shoulder. Cap pushed his face into the ground, clutching as jocks huddled round. I trusted myself more than this, trusted myself to let them roam, die from infectious feline AIDS. Other cats tangle and romp in my recycling bin; tonight I'll see what I can scare up too, call a few numbers while other guys gather around cars and rap shakes windows, all of us strutting this thin street together almost too pleased with what we are.

## The Rake

I had been out back raking leaves for a while  
when I noticed my Brazilian neighbor.  
At first I thought he was just swishing a stick  
through a pile of maple leaves like he was  
poking for a snake. Suddenly he was up  
to his knees, and I saw what it was: new  
and big and plastic and red. It made me jealous  
as I had been as a kid when I used a metal rake  
with five prongs twisting out from its head.  
I had been teaching him about yard work—  
he imitated what I did, mowed when I mowed,  
and now to see that he was prepared,  
had gone to K-Mart and bought the rake that  
I'd always wanted, well, it made me mad.  
He looked up and walked through what was left  
of the fence between our yards. "What do I do  
with them all?" he asked, waving his red rake.  
Watch out for dog poop I wanted to tell him;  
instead, I told him about yard refuse tags,  
then confided, "I rake mine against the back-fence  
but let's rake a pile between us first, it's easier."  
"Rake a pile," he chuckled, "I like this phrase."  
Lord, he was a demon with his rake—he flashed  
its red head into the maples' leafy wake  
with the gusto of someone who thought that  
he was sweeping an entire forest away.  
I guess it might have been a sort of revenge:  
where he was from leaves never fell. So though  
he was an amateur, I struggled to keep up.  
I didn't care that I wasn't wearing gloves  
and would blister from my feverish race.  
I beat at my leaves like they were on fire.  
He kept pace, thinking it a game. He didn't know  
I was fighting for all the Thanksgivings  
of my youth spent raking my grandfather's lawn,  
all the long summers piling grass clippings.  
As I watched his side of the pile grow,  
I promised myself that when it snowed  
I would fling the first snow ball—he would stare  
trying to figure out why I had done this,  
and why I had piled a wall around my car:  
he would not know how to retaliate until  
I packed one in front of his face and let fly.

And at that moment, though my swinging shoulders  
burned, I loved the sweaty ceaseless pulse  
of yard-work, loved November—its cold blue sky—  
loved the jacket's warmth my grandmother had made,  
and how itchy I had gotten again;  
loved even the memory of my stepfather  
scouring his yard, scratching every leaflet  
from the ground like he scraped his sparse hair  
neatly down across his head. Finally done,  
jackets covered in flecks, rakes shouldered askew,  
we stood like two soldiers panting on either side  
of the biggest pile of leaves in the world.  
And if that is the distance that I must hold  
from every other person I will never cease  
in my joy. Then we dropped our rakes and jumped.

## 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.

## 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 boyfriend—  
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 vacuuming desiccated 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 through 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 psycholinguist.

Then she would lantern the sky with the rude but effective fireworks  
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.

How you never forget anyone you've ever loved.

## Schema of Memory, Metaphor of a Dog

You would like to think memory  
a place you can dwell,  
but its chains are too complex.  
Its small, solid masses  
do not have room for you—  
though mostly they are made  
of nothing. Yet this accumulated separation,  
that indefinable distance shared  
between every particle, which  
eventually amounts to matter,  
is how you have left all the best places:  
phone held to your shoulder,  
tracing lines on napkins,  
as you doodled your way from life  
to life, one level of ball-point blue  
extended out beyond the next, dangled  
on the phone line disconnecting  
one interior from the other.  
No map will ever bring you closer  
to putting your finger  
into the spaces you've left,  
not even the sketch you made in sixth grade  
of all the nuclear sub bases  
in the world, or the globe  
you infected with measles,  
a red dot plotted for each ground-zero  
epicenter of the *Trident's* targets.  
But, memory, that irretrievable ideogram  
of scars, has no fine-blue  
recollection of landscape,  
no path by which you can trace  
your way out. Instead, it lives  
as your long dead childhood dog  
that keeps tracking his way back;  
whose Peruvian name, Cholo, means  
*stranger in one's own land*;  
whose errant vertebrae were looped  
together by surgeon-fine wire  
after he wandered onto the road.  
Appliance of memory's desperation,  
he will not now stop howling  
at the bright splotches  
skipping in from every uncurtained exit.

Yes, this is how it works.  
You must say it: Memory,  
you are the last party in town,  
and I hate how I return to your  
cigarette butts and closed up house  
with the same people chasing  
each other for the same unknown reasons,  
the same snap-backed dog waddling  
outside my window night after night,  
though I know it is really me, naked  
and tethered, who paces the mud path  
which twists like a tourniquet  
along that chain-link fence  
around a dwelling I used to think  
I could leave. Now, with me,  
call this place by its better name:  
Dedication. Come, let us  
scrape and paint its ruined eaves.

## Cranberry

Grandma slices her jelled cranberries thin  
and leans out over the crowded table  
to divvy them amongst our plates. I slump  
into my straight-backed chair, hoping to be skipped.

Clutching my glass with one hand, I pour milk  
from the jug with the other: too much salt  
in this year's ham has made us all thirsty.  
She sneaks me a slice, its round red tongue

protruding into my gravied potatoes.  
Her eyebrows arch, waiting. The green beans halt  
in my mother's hands. My aunt stops scolding  
a cousin; around the table clanks subside.

The first Thanksgiving after my grandpa's death,  
I scoop grandmother's cranberries off my plate.  
They quiver like part of her heart on my fork.  
Bitter berry, bitter fruit, I can barely choke

you down. *It's good*, I tell her. *It's good*.

## Ruby in Darkness

V-J Day, August 14, 1945, Denver Colorado

1.

Across the dark room where bodies  
enfolding bodies, he caught her eye  
and crossed her way as she backed out.

He was uniformed, but who knows  
the details. She is my grandmother.  
She was eighteen, and everyone

seemed to have uniforms that night—  
and in or out, everyone had their duty.  
She backed against the hall wall

as he climbed over supine bodies.  
He slammed the door shut behind,  
leaving them alone in the hallway's

bare light. The hallway smelled  
of dust. The dust of things caught  
inside too long. Not the dust

of her childhood sod home, not  
the dust of her father's broken furrows.  
His shadow grew as he approached:

*Don't look like you belong here.*  
He held his hands out, together  
and low, a cup he might pour her into.

A cup whose water she could just catch  
her reflection in. Outside, steel  
squealed on steel: a streetcar's breaks.

A general cry arose, a barked command,  
followed by a hundred fists hammering  
steel sides and the grate of rocking

metal. A cheer burst as the streetcar  
skipped off the tracks. She listened,  
rigid. *They've been doing it all night.*

She turned to the window and wiped  
the dust off with her sleeve. The crowd  
had turned away. The last shadow

disappeared into an alley. He laid  
his hand on her shoulder, *Don't worry.*  
*I've got enough for a cab. We'll get you home.*

2.

You sat a long time in your barber's  
chair that afternoon fondling a roller,  
until its spines sunk into your palm.

What would become of a bookish  
girl off a homestead in Colorado?  
Your father refused college:

*Make you good for nothing.*  
So perms and shears, Denver beauty  
school with your sister Pearl.

And if you were just to leave, who  
could say what had happened? You'd  
always just be over the prairie horizon.

But you always stayed. That night  
you worked late; shut down the school.  
Dust in the air clouded out the stars.

*Come on,* an older girl said, *I know*  
*where there's a party. You can't get home*  
*anyway.* You paused. You ought to finish

sweeping up the hair, shut off the light,  
and call Pearl for a way home.  
But maybe, this once, you should go with

your friend. After all, whooping carousers  
had knocked the street cars off their rails,  
and though there were no stars, the air

smelled of dust from the farms,  
and all across the city people had opened  
their blinds at last. Revelers spilt

into the streets. Why shouldn't you celebrate?  
Hadn't you worked a year in a ship-pump  
repair factory? Hadn't you sown denim

work pants for navy welders? That is,  
hadn't you helped keep the ship afloat?  
Wasn't it now your turn to feel the air,

your eyes already permanently squinted  
against the sun? Think of it:  
people doing what they had always wanted—

gangs of service men knocking down poles,  
turning over cars, kissing women—  
letting go all they had held back

so long. Why ask now what it is  
that brings us to a certain end?  
Ruby, kill the light. Leave the hair.

## Concern, As It Were, A Burning Heart

Dishes washed and stacked, the hammock sways empty.  
A ruthless spring sky yellows dim overhead.  
Sprinklers mutter on; hoses coil striped and green,  
perched like serpents over their quiet gardens.  
A spoon clanks on an empty pan far away  
dislodging crust from meat broiled too long.  
Tree frogs' chirps cease. Weed-eaters and clippers  
falter and stall, hang loose in gloved grips:  
someone has forgotten to turn off the oven.  
You can smell the smoke everywhere.  
Then, over the fences from each flank,  
spoons are rapping against pot sides.  
Soon neighbors call the fire department,  
the entire street billows out, curious  
and dismayed at the smoke pouring  
from windows and doors. Their windows,  
their doors. Hands which beckon greeting,  
become hands that flap at the smoke  
welling from their own mouths. Pets streak  
from one side of the street to the other,  
hurdle from one burning owner to the next.  
Passing drivers stop, blinded, and spill  
from their cars, spin and finally collapse  
gazing into the clouds gummed with fire.  
There is no grief, only flame jetting  
from every oven—and relief. So much relief.  
Bodies bared and crusting, they break off neighbors'  
fingers, rough tongues on bones, flinging  
themselves at last on the burnt expanse of what  
they have loved too much, smelled too long.  
Now everyone burns, slung into thirst,  
unslackened smoke like a thousand onions  
in their eyes, and they begin to gather in chorus,  
whacking spoons on charred crocks and pitch  
through scorched hedges, burst over blackened  
pavement, a gargling cavalcade of flagellants  
that rock in gasp and stomp, croaking the carols  
of their slow scoring. Street lamps flicker on.  
And plunged in the ground like a quavering thermometer  
a barbecue-skewer, uncleaned for years,  
awakens. Come, its black tongue waggles,  
choke out this discovered life.

## Walking Together What Remains (a found poem from the first day of spring)<sup>1</sup>

A hyacinth's broken bloom trails  
purple over its thin green<sup>2</sup> stem.  
Ants bridge the bones,<sup>3</sup>  
walking together  
what remains.<sup>4</sup>  
What you crave:<sup>5</sup> white peeling<sup>6</sup>  
dogwood petals, just born<sup>7</sup>  
ivy<sup>8</sup>, long uncut, wintergreen<sup>9</sup>  
cedar<sup>10</sup>. Mountain dew<sup>11</sup>  
on smiling sand<sup>12</sup>. Yard-side,  
under yellow twined  
forsythia,<sup>13</sup> early  
wild strawberries<sup>14</sup> rise.

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<sup>1</sup>Or maybe I should have called it "Piecing Together What Was in Mouths.@ On the first day of spring 2000, I took a 30 minute walk and picked up trash I found on the roadside. When I arrived home, I used my hot glue gun and made a collage. I also selected pieces which had been in people's mouths, harvested images and words from them, and created this "found poem.@ The footnotes explain the objects I found.

<sup>2</sup>A burst green balloon trailing a purple ribbon. In past years, once pink or blue for boy or girl. Or maybe it was a birthday. Birthday or Babe? Now we will not know forever.

<sup>3</sup>A scoured leg bone of a chicken Anyone would recognize what we've eaten so many of from KFC.

<sup>4</sup>Words, all these words, we share have been in people's mouths. Torn and tossed road-side Obituary Page: AFay Elizabeth Emery, 68" AClara Eudell Hedger, 85" AMary Ellen Davis-Powell, 84" AColumbia, James Clifford Maupin, 75" AHindman, ABertha Amburgey, 94" ACorbin, Rose Gentry.@ Compiled by Crystal Morgan, Pg B2, March 20.

<sup>5</sup>Or so says the front of White Castle's burger box.

<sup>6</sup>Styrofoam coffee cup with teeth impression and not a coffee stain left!

<sup>7</sup>AJust Born@ is the company who makes AHot Tamales@ Achewy cinnamon: America's favorite cinnamon candy.@ A sun, with sunglasses on, adorns the collapsed red paper-board box, dulled with rain and wear.

<sup>8</sup>Dairy Queen's "Season's Greetings@ collapsed white cup. Sprightly ivy studs it! Bottom torn : APlease Do Not Litter.@

<sup>9</sup>Skoat chewing tobacco: small, plastic. AAlways there in a Pinch@ AFree samples not available to minors.@

<sup>10</sup>I found a piece of gum in this label: "Cedar Window box Label: real wood products.@ AIdeal for inside or outside window accents.@ 35"x7"x6"

<sup>11</sup>You know, Mountain Dew, crushed flat, gold and green can and all. Talk about wrestling with clichés!

<sup>12</sup>Colonel Sanders, from KFC, his effigy emblazoned upon a Pepsi cup standard. Strangely the cup was square.

<sup>13</sup>Or should I say entangled? A Kroger's multi-grain bread bag caught in the just-cut limbs of a too voracious forsythia.

Near, in a road-side puddle,  
sun slick green,<sup>15</sup>  
empty whipped light<sup>16</sup> and red torn<sup>17</sup>  
untended tulip's reflection.<sup>18</sup>  
Caught unseeded rupture.<sup>19</sup>  
*Paraité du maquillage chaque fois.*<sup>20</sup>  
Then, like ocean spray,<sup>21</sup>  
a crack and crest of red feathers<sup>22</sup>  
splashes tire-worn water  
from flat trod ground.<sup>23</sup>

Listen and respond.<sup>24</sup>  
what is left still remains.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Strawberry nerds. Artificially flavored like all nerds. 1" square box. A Willy Wonka! You never know what you'll find when you open that wrapper.

<sup>15</sup>A Sun Chips French Onion Multi-Grain Snakes. 30% less fat bag still black, smooth slick, stark, and catching, shining green, undulled beneath the puddle where it was found.

<sup>16</sup>Ultra-pasteurized, Whipped light Whipping Cream bent in half, flattened, heavy, half-legible in its rust.

<sup>17</sup>The wrapper from A Wonka Laffy Taffy: good things are always found under sewer grates. See number 19 below.

<sup>18</sup>Literally. Its reflection caught in a jagged 3" triangle of a mirror coated bumper. Okay, so this one was never in anyone's mouth, but I found six hubcaps too, and I had to include something!

<sup>19</sup>A burst box of 12 unopened (though I couldn't convince my wife that they were usable) Contact Maxipads: "Individually wrapped A Comfort/Protection/Stays in Place A bag non-flushable, snagged in a grate and freedom so close at hand! These would not be in most people's mouths either, but it was quite a find.

<sup>20</sup>Or that's the French translation of COVER GIRL's suggestion about how to use "A Make Up Masters Sponge Wedges." The plastic still adhering to its cardboard back.

<sup>21</sup>Cranberry Juice Cocktail. Glass dangles off a sturdy paper wrapping holding together the broken bottle.

<sup>22</sup>A Red Man Chewing Tobacco. Literally A Red Man head in a long feather war bonnet. "America's best chew. Large size. This one had been run over by many cars.

<sup>23</sup>Budweiser. You can hear those stallions stamping down the snow-covered way, the carriage behind carrying The "Millennium Can. Since 1876.

<sup>24</sup>Listen and respond with your Visa, MasterCard, or American express. Singles Ads, page B6, March 20th, Herald-Leader. A Place your free A Woman Seeking A Love Unleashed A Cyber Singles A Strawberry Seeking A Kentucky Red. Just five pages after the obits.

<sup>25</sup>Read these names again. How long will how much of what they left from their lives be with us? Their names? Their love? Their refuse? Obituary Page: A Fay Elizabeth Emery, 68" A Clara Eudell Hedger, 85" A Mary Ellen Davis-Powell, 84" A Columbia, James Clifford Maupin, 75", A Hindman, A Bertha Amburgey, 94" A Corbin, Rose Gentry. Compiled by Crystal Morgan, Pg B2, March 20.

## Oracular Hope

When I first noticed the spot in my eye  
Swimming below and right of the line I read,  
I thought diabetic-death, hemorrhaging  
Capillaries. Cracked and seeping darkness.  
Across my retinal corona, the doctor's  
Flash and photo. Ocular interior  
Like a solar surface, yellow-veined red,  
Dotted pink with small clouds where thin walls burst.  
I thought I would never tell anyone  
But clutch and pressurize inner darkening.  
Kidney failure. Occluded circulation.  
I could not have guessed I would discharge fear  
And darkness held alone for seventeen years  
Into your clear, chronic care. I did not dare.

## Tabula Rasa

It begins by cleaning out the garage. The place untouched things collect. I'm paying back my father—whose house I have not spent a night in for twelve years—for loans. I've scooped rust from gutters, caulked yellowjacket holes, cared for his stroke-ridden mother and chased copperheads from his deadfall

of sticks and poison ivy compiled over years. Every night I open

the curtains in the room I'm assigned to stay in. I find them drawn shut each evening before I go to sleep. There is more to say about this, but I will say only that half-explained is the way with opening and shutting, and who can really say what might shut you back again, or for that matter what might open

up under you. Then the basement, where they hole up

their dogs. First I clear out newspapers stained with dog piss from dogs I did not grow up with in order to make room on the floor for the shelves I clear of twenty cane-woven Easter baskets I never plundered. I toss out stacks of cracked enamel paint cans from rooms I did not paint and box a hundred empty mason

jars I did not eat from. But by touching the untouched on a back

shelf it begins. By touching a leather bound empty photo album, binding carefully sutured with bailing twine. A feather war bonnet and charging buffalo have been tooled on the cover, one blow at a time. Inside a sheaf of heavy cotton-bond paper, completely smooth and very dry, though unstained. I perch it on

the table, awaiting my stepmother's return. Adulted half-known

weekend son, I'm the reason she takes this lunch hour off from her practice as a drug abuse counselor. She's surprised when she sees the album, draws the blinds to get a better look. *My uncle made it in 1949 at Kentucky State Psychiatric Hospital.* Then she pulls photos from a crumbling black album and points

out his off position slantwise boyish smile. At edges

he appears in uniform behind his brother before they go to war.  
Or in a family shot dated 1935, rangy body half in the frame,  
hangs half-dazed on the edge of a Dakota corral in chaps.  
Or a school group mug shot, marked Harlan county Kentucky 1930,  
him half-dreaming, caught in an earnest sideways glance at

another school boy, ground covered with snow. Then taking back

up the album, *Something to do with his hands. Perfect emptiness  
for an emptied life. Guess he just got it done early,* mumbles  
something I don't catch about her father's own suicide six years  
ago with a shotgun, and she is out the door. It is her basement  
I unearth today, in its darkness leastways mine. Yes, yes this, our

darkness, its unknown shares divvied akin. Tangential uncle,

I carry you back downstairs. No one has ever spoken your name  
around our table no one has broken your broken bread no, no one  
disturbs the cocoon of your blankness—the hands that rolled off  
your body, the smirks that endured. And what now of your tied gait  
and gawk, crew cut and smile, that leaving rift?

I enter this basement through you into namelessness,

that undisturbable darkness that each must leave behind.  
I return downstairs with vacuum, with bleach, with this blank book,  
my not-name written in it, clutched under my arm. I will stand  
with the dead. The dead who understand only sponge and fragrant water.

**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. Looking for a split  
in the road, the moon  
has no face.

I'm sticking my thumb  
into the dark.

I'm going to see  
what stops.

## Old Ladies Who Drive Caddies

I love the old ladies: their heads perking  
over the bend of the dash, like a turtle's  
creep and rise above its turret's edge. Love  
the danger they put us all in with white  
bobbing scarf-tied bouffants, striving  
forward for another day of joy.  
I love them for their meticulous seeking.  
Food for the cats, to the studio to shape  
clay, ranging the mall, or one last trip  
to the liquor store. I love how their humps  
bend as they park at the grocery, how they back  
into parking and cross the lines anyway,  
how they start slow from the red light driving  
an entire line of lunch-crazed workers  
behind them mad, buzzing with impatience  
and fear. How they take their time.  
How they make it precious. This world loves  
them in the stylist's massage, in the roar  
of the gleaming hair dryer. I love how they  
take care of themselves, seeking the good way  
to go in Lincoln-Continental and Caddies.  
How they take it fast at a curve on the way  
to their sister's, their cardiologist's,  
their churches, their yoga classes, or glance,  
again, too long at deer on the roadside  
as they streak past wind-torn trees bent  
to their passing on their way to meet God.

**The Sound of Passing**  
(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.  
Like words tangled in fallen foliage,  
few leaves catch the sound of passing  
better than many.

## 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 lipping  
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.

## Limit 55

October light twists greens tawny  
yellow. Traveling south down Indiana  
150 from Paoli, plots  
of knee-high soy burn golden brown,  
and dwarf corn's wicked crowns have  
not yet been whittled to the ground.  
I come this way with windows down,  
but I can't say if it's the sound of insects  
I want to hear as I roll over  
hilly roads: trailers and run-down  
gas stations, the goad of an old  
tractor driver motioning all  
of us forward. While I suppose  
it's better than the interstate,  
is this a lie we tell to placate  
our need for that song we barely  
hear? Better to stall the car  
next to the concrete deer,  
and walk off this asphalt pier; smell  
barley and wheat, let nameless  
bugs bite crouched next to the stream's bed,  
and disappear, disappear. Do  
I tell another lie? Listen,  
something blazes in the blue,  
and the plants we cannot name, name us,  
calling us the dower of separateness,  
displaced stewards of some drowning grace.

## Sump

Here in the city man dies oppressed at heart, man perishes with despair in his heart.  
I have looked over the wall and I see bodies floating on the river and also that will be my lot.

*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Transformers shattered by tree limbs laden with ice, the electricity is out. Rain for three days, then today a cold snap, and still rain swelling in the slow dark over limestone aquifers, around washers, dryers, furnaces; streams spill even from basement walls. My stepfather and I tear down shelves and cinder blocks, smear quick dry cement. We plug

one leak after the next, flashlights clutched in mouths, as my mother mans the hand-pump, its creak and lift droning in the background of our hammers and the staccato of our exact commands *Here. Now.* 4:30 a.m., and we've been at it since six, tramping in an unnatural brigade from house to house through the dead of winter. The underground stream

running under all our houses has risen as it did when the pumps worked, as we knew that it would when they did not. Our next door neighbor, Bertha, withered with osteoporosis, called us back from Grandma's birthday, called us back past wreck after wreck over ice-sheathed streets. My mother's upholstery business tucked

in our basement twenty years about to be Noahed. Home, we ferry her bolts of hundred-dollar-a-yard fabric up through the dark, three on each shoulder. Snow swaddled street Wrecked electric repair truck Bowed and shattered oak My mother on her knees, pail after pail. Whose emergency is this? the rain bolting down, icing as it strikes? Rain coating salt,

coating dumb first flowers? Now it is Patrick's mother who lives a block away that calls, and we go, lugging our pump, skidding over level ground, nowhere close to river, nowhere close to sea, yet the river has risen through the ground, and foundations made way. Half-covered furniture mounded on the stairs, we're back again in our own basement, knee-deep

in wet wool. Three pairs of frozen gloves float like abandoned hands in the black water. Then from the sump-pump's puncture, through concrete issues a wail. We're unsure, though, since the only sound has been of steady rain and our own labor. Then the knell bleeds up again. My stepfather cocks his head

towards Bertha's house, turning his mouthed flashlight away leaving us endarkened. Stilled, we grasp at each other's arms, allow the released pump to settle completely under. And it comes again. Clear, exact, soft. Comes over the rain, over my mother's breath. It comes again, again over even the silence of the rising water.

## *Behind the Ear*

The great blocks weigh as much as ten tons apiece; the roof is a foot and a half thick.... While the tomb was under construction, [Whitman] its eventual occupant gloried in its magnificence, visited it regularly with his friends in his horse-carriage, and picnicked on the grounds.

Stanley Kunitz, from "At the Tomb of Walt Whitman"

Walking from room to forget-  
ful room, you twiddle your tomb  
like a pen that's run dry. Tuck  
it behind your ear. Forget  
about it. Moments later, something  
hits you that you want to chronicle  
with your tomb. But you can't find  
your tomb. You never have a tomb  
when you need one, and though you own  
a thousand, they're lost in couches  
and old bags, crammed into coats  
along with old raisins, nasty  
quarters. You jerk up and range  
into the room you just left. Light  
wraps around onions over the sink,  
and you forget why you came though  
you know there was a reason. White  
teapot glows on the stove, a rack  
of herbs. You go back to the table  
to take some notes but can't find  
your tomb. *Now* you remember.  
What have you done with it?  
Scrambling, you search dirty jeans,  
the car where you used your tomb  
to write a deposit. You check  
your favorite places, meddle  
all the furniture. The only question  
you ask: *where have I put my tomb?*  
First you mumble it to yourself.  
Then it's like your keys, your glasses,  
your wallet. Gone like everything  
you need but can never find.  
So now you're slamming around,  
and your cats have gone into hiding.  
Finally, about to cry, you scream  
*Where is my fucking tomb?*  
And though you know it's no big deal  
(you can always find a new tomb),

you hate yourself because the issue  
is bigger than your dumb tomb.  
It's about responsibility and care.  
Your stepfather said you'd do this,  
tried to teach you to keep things neat,  
in a place you wouldn't lose them.  
That's what you're weeping for now.  
Finally you go to pee and when,  
wiping the tears off, you look  
at your gummy eyes in the mirror,  
you find it. There it is, where  
your glasses are, behind your ear:  
your tomb. Just where you put it.  
It's funny. It's sad.  
Back at your table, you sit down  
with your tomb, but it won't write.  
It's all dried out, or you crushed the nib.  
The cap's not on it. *Fuck* you think.  
It *was* your favorite tomb after all.  
And you are tired of fooling yourself  
with old tins crammed with tombs,  
so this time you make a promise:  
You will throw it away, won't  
cajole it with gentle shaking any more,  
or lick its tip, staining your lip  
with tomb juice—all the tricks  
you wheedle to get old tombs to work.  
Maybe you'll steal one from your  
writer friend or from the secretary.  
They always have the best tombs.  
The ones that just guide your hand  
and gush when you set them down.

But truth is—and I'm being honest now—  
that you will never need to find another.

## 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—  
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.

## Like a Tree My Life

Like a tree  
my life consists  
of ninety percent dead matter  
and I am home  
to a thousand bugs.  
And like a tree I still have  
a thousand leav-  
ings; a thousand  
branches; a thousand  
roots. A thousand buds.

## All the Airedales Named Morgan After The Child You Surrendered

for Sharon on her 50<sup>th</sup>

/we say that dogs are our instant memory our salvation our greetings our green faces  
our shaggy bombardments and yes this is the way the past lives unpinned and running  
and lapping water everywhere they call to you turning the corners and flipping on the  
lights to wedged rooms tucked between the pages of the pictures you've never shown  
anyone/

/spent cast of the reel fails to bring to surface any of the fish though you wade deeper  
and further out sand underfoot finally there is a bridge and you could be underwater for  
a decade cigarettes by the wayside and medicine in a metal filing box getting there by  
the side of a pond calling longdistance the unseen tugging at you because you had stuck  
your arm in and now the rest had to go /

/toward backyards which were worn as the dog's track toward the paths walked  
between barns and stores and stills and there was a companion trotting along who  
fetched already the story of what you had already lost and where the finding was  
beyond the range of light beyond the tight hands and early morning and tobacco spits  
and grandfather's gums when was it that the other came onto the scene always a  
presence beside you /

/not a matter of memories but how everything kept going and the sensation of shedding  
page after page in the bathtub the world as an example of readings and translucence  
after sleep after rest after peace the writing the images of self like fish deep in the  
current of circles and meeting and love and illicit doing what had to be done fresh wakes  
and spreadings and in the process much learned about how to keep presences at your  
side /

/recast and fillet this pile of chagrin and untellings out on the counter where dishes  
cluster half completed and the freezer full of tatter tots and unnamables but full and the  
pile of paperbacks and your work at Midway College a place of connections where your  
children ran after candles in the stream at graduation through the empty stone  
auditorium amid the young woman's graces the candles streaming downward toward  
the river /

/after that Age and Daring Return this time deeper in deeper without drowning and the  
casting out and recognition of overlapping presences and renewals still coffee by the  
dreg-load always with patient howls of greeting each other in reenactment the  
playhouse chiseled from plywood children playing with each other's things in the  
dogdoo yard happy as happenstance wiffle balls slugged at starwars greenmachines  
Volkswagen fordstationwagons stevenking swimteam tee-ball vacations weekends yes  
as much as all that would allow us when the animals howled to get inside and we let  
them in /

/craft of boonesborough craft of dropping off the kids craft of a day alone craft of sneaking need craft of the hand fashioned supple painting craft of aunt kay who knew the stories that swam between you in the inlets and craft of unsteady beaches of roam and escape their papery skins and the recipes for coming and going over the mountain's spread/

/dakota backlash the range open in front of this leaving place the sky evening a tune like a lake to hide in rudiments of survival a dog by your side the field before you and no one knows where you are or the dog inside by your side the smell of wet fur and flea scratchings what was dragged in bring it in next to you under the afghan on the bed your grandfather crafted bring it to your lover your companion your sacred man let it lay what was dragged in by your dog next to you as you shake her warm belly let it lay next to you as if it was your own body It is/

## 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 tailbone. 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.

2

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 tattoos 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.

## Against Light, Red-leaf

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

Now even your lips are gone, the music  
done. Maybe every word or thought refers  
only to this namelessness, & in the cold wind  
from the window no language can even begin  
to say what is happening to my face  
& 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,

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

## Leaving, I leave you

Leaving, I leave you  
poems by Komachi; how distant  
are we even now,

our two faces pressed against  
her paper wall from either side.

**Minerva's 90<sup>th</sup>**  
(Fellowship Hall, Russiaville, Indiana)

Your grandmother takes my hand and guides me past the choir pit,  
past the cousins from California and Idaho who cluster far from  
the photographer's banister. I am tugged and named to all the uncles,

aunts, and family friends. Your father came of age in this church,  
and your grandfather lies outside. And today, your father smiles,  
happy at his mother's 85<sup>th</sup> and her sister's Minerva's 90<sup>th</sup> party.

Your face lurks everywhere: a smattering of noses, locks of curled hair,  
and blue eyes all around, speaking what they have shared,  
story upon story of tangled faces, your bearded cousin's silent eyes.

Beyond the distances and relations yoked by the matrons' birthdays,  
we seek recess, driving out to your uncle's farm where your father  
grew up. Acres of corn arc squarely away to either side.

But the barn (from the grainy photo where your father squats  
between his parents atop a pickup as a child) is gone; instead,  
stalled llamas seek consort. New stock in the field

your father fled but in which you feel all too planted,  
when we return, Great-aunt Minerva bequeaths us her birding  
binoculars. Through the glacier-leveled fields on the way home,

the pale binocular case will perch in your lap. What are we given  
to see? After breaking cake, we wander the forest of granite grave  
stones outside Fellowship Hall, tracing the remnants of lime-faces

on the field's far flanks. In celebration of our first night together  
we adventured to our local cemetery, and now enwrapped  
in sun, we read from the clusters of dates how eleven children

died in a month's space in 1871. What has changed?  
on our fridge, pictures of friends' babies crowd the freezer door,  
magnets holding them up: Blue Cross/Blue Shield, ValuJet,

**BOYCOTT FOLGERS: STOP EL SALVADOR DEATH SQUADS.**  
As we wend back to the family, from behind the worn stones,  
a toddler rushes hide-and-seeking into her waiting father's arms.

## After Accident

Until I almost died I never hawed  
about my blood's dumb tugging, or about how  
the book I had written stared blank  
up into the dark. Now, candidate  
for dispersion, I now lope to pale  
gates that my passion had pried open  
with its winding; I smell old bedrooms,  
that echo like caverns where I seek  
reconciliation in forebearant monitoring.  
How I hunker over my blood  
test strips, poking my fingers again  
and again, six times a day, calling  
out 124! 53! 248! 34! 120! 78!  
Always adjusting, seeking to swerve downward.  
How my neck buckles and hangs, plunged into  
the accordance of worry. I pick my scalp  
into stigmata, pry back the skin  
a fingernail full at a time,  
poking for layers that I might  
lie buried under. And I peel scabs  
out of my hair like they were my betrayers,  
like ticks, rather than my own inadequate  
plunging back into teenage acne nervousness.  
I drop them down on the page,  
shut the book to squash them.  
They, too, remain unread  
in the labyrinth of my darkness.

## Zen Garden

Lapped, the cat stretches  
his claws into my leg  
so I knock him  
without thought.  
He leaps, disconnects  
the phone I am talking  
on, busts the answering  
machine and upsets the Zen  
sand garden Mom made me.  
Gone are the circular patterns  
I had cleared with the miniature  
rake. I just sit and stare,  
the phone buzzing in my ear.  
And then, from out of nowhere,  
my roommate zooms  
to the rescue, vacuum in hand,  
and knocks the sand garden off  
the table, scattering  
sand and pebbles  
all over the carpet.  
I watch. I'm shaking  
with anger, clutching the dead  
phone by its cord as  
my roommate spreads  
on the floor picking  
through the sand,  
collecting shells and  
blue stones in his palm.  
I drop everything,  
drag the vacuum close,  
and in my tumult  
of scouring it up,  
dislodge the lamp  
from its stool,  
shattering the bulb.  
My roommate dances  
on all fours. Now  
I trod everything,  
dodging cords,  
filaments cracking  
as the vacuum  
eats them. I shove aside  
the red garden box  
and empty shade.  
Nothing that has spilled  
will get away.

## Lakes and Stars

Not finding a spot to pull over, he was yelling  
at everything as they drove the gravel  
roads to Jordan Lake, seeking a place to look  
at stars. All day he had read a book about them,  
dreamed of learning their alignments on his back.  
Searching for a place out of the light from town,  
they sought maps at every podunk Stop and Go.  
Somehow they had thought they could just pull  
off the road, and why didn't they?

The gates were closed to all the parks.  
And scared of property, scared of dogs, scared  
of committing sin outside of what was sure,  
he beat the driver's wheel, huddled in the car,  
as the stars burned against the lake's glass.

He did not know how to stop and rest with her  
on the warm hood, letting eyes harp  
amidst the pin-points of unearthly light.

What was it that terrified him? Driving blindly,  
he roared back into town and pulled her to a pond  
where ducks squawked and trees barely opened.  
She sat for a minute, staring up at the breeching  
stars and asked to be taken home.

When he returned his coffee's steam crept  
into the night. He lay on his back stunned  
angry, sad, and searching  
for how Cyrus flew from Cassiopeia  
as her man Cepheus looked the other way.  
To bed and shelter from his nameless rage,  
when he finally arrived home, she was warm  
accepted him, and the night opened up  
under the constellations of their quilts.

## 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  
and 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.

## 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  
Whom 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  
Onto 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.

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.

## The School-Teacher's Husband

Surrounded by the green of new felt sheets,  
I wake up long before you and shoo the cat  
away from the clawed and marked bed frame.

The first aloneness, I prepare oatmeal and coffee.  
This morning our kisses are brief, tied back  
like your hair against the flood of getting ready.

Washing up breakfast dishes, I watch you over  
my shoulder as you make up your face and poise  
hair. Radio news coats the air like your stockings

that used to fit; pulled together like the sandwich  
and muffin I packed for your lunch. Amid your final  
scramble, I help you search for keys and we cleave

cleave the air. Give me your back and strong lips.  
I know why Li Po wrote the "River-Merchant's Wife"  
as you are, with a kiss on my cheek, out the door.

## First Shower

When your lover slaps the alarm,  
gets up first and starts her shower,  
it is what wakes you to yourself.  
Under what remains of the night's covers,  
as she washes, you touch each part  
of her to make her ready for the day,  
though the shampoo that rested  
in the sill must be cold in her hair.  
Swimming too, stretching out  
each arm and leg, it is the waterfall  
of dream that washes your face;  
steam pours sweet and continuous,  
and you know there will be nothing  
left, no hot water, and the image  
of water pouring through air scours  
the residue of the yesterday's day-worry—  
the phone calls, the grades to give  
and driving and planning all swirl  
away down past the hair in the drain,  
though some catches there, backing up  
the water. As it rises around your ankles,  
you realize you left out last night's  
the vegetable soup that you spent all day making.  
So you picture yourself putting it away.  
Things are easy to solve.  
Then another five are gone  
resting in the rush of the first  
shower. It is the first day  
of autumn, and the air is under 55,  
everywhere except the bathroom,  
and the cats have curled on the foot  
of the bed all night and you are warm  
and will soon have coffee, so you sleep.  
It is the longest sleep you have ever had  
until she arrives toweled to tell you  
ten minutes are up. Time to rise.

## Fall

When the sun did its work,  
he would creep under the fruits  
drying on the rack—  
garlic, mom's bras, towels,  
his own tattered cords, holes  
in knees. He lay as they swayed,  
feeling shadows splashing  
over his face. Those seamless days spun  
like maple helicopter seeds.  
He threw them hard as he could  
and they always landed near.  
He danced beneath, uncut bangs  
whirling out. How many times  
he flipped them back. How many times  
they fell over his eyes.

Looking back,  
rain rolls down the panes.  
Pressed against the bright outside,  
his face peers out, pockets packed  
with helicopters and red "no-no" berries  
from the shag-bush. Untried hope,  
mashed and poisonous. Yeah, he got it good  
once mom washed those gooey cords.

It is that child, that rack, I lay beneath.  
As he sways, I throw him up again.

## Woodland Park

Grass high around, we slid the slim  
Chinese soldiers, whom the barest shake  
would topple, across the flat planed  
chess board. Above us, in skirts,  
young men, claiming Rainbow Clan,  
swung off the oak's low elbows.  
Sometimes if you look up you can  
see everything. Sometimes only  
what is pushed falls. An old one  
with a beard sat down with us.  
Children were leaping in the pool,  
kept by an iron fence. Many throws  
of the frisbee you and I have volleyed  
in that park. Many pieces lost  
as we settled with our lovers  
under trees. I returned this year.  
Twigs had sprouted wild over  
branches just out of leap's reach.  
The low bending arm had been cut.  
The old one? He played a good  
game, laughing when his pieces fell.

## Red Glare

Last night I drove east,  
toward the hills out of town,  
then back west through the red  
fog-sweat of sunset settling  
over downtown. It has been too  
long since I've known this city  
in red. It's Patrick's bachelor  
party I'm heading toward.  
The rockets he launches  
for groomsmen will burn the sky.  
All his old friends show except Kyran.

Teenage nights we skateboarded  
long, low hills—Kyran, Patrick  
and I—our rickshaw  
of kicks streaming past  
trash cans that some nights  
we'd have knocked over.  
Bottle-rocket in hand, Pat  
waited for cars and sent  
his red flare chasing after.  
Once we "borrowed" a friend's  
parent's station-wagon, leaving it  
marooned in construction site mud.  
Once we threw eggs at anything  
faster than us. Once valley  
roads held our tight turns  
as we rode their break  
and drop.

In the first dark  
of early evening, a silent siren  
light strobed the stillness.  
An ambulance has pulled up  
next to Pat's crunched  
apple-red Mustang convertible.  
As we had crested a hill,  
sunset silhouetted the trees  
and stop signs. A scream  
of breaks. Glass littered  
the highway—Patrick, Kyran,  
and I rattled, but okay,  
We never stole another street sign.

and buried all the ones we had.

Kyran, now, his legs plying some  
spirit street, is not to be found.  
Did we delve those nights for the same  
reason Kyran killed himself?  
I never go enough into the night.  
It follows me everywhere.  
Such silence. All my love for the world  
held in a wayward firework,  
skipping lopsided over Pat's back fence.  
I didn't know how much I loved  
being chased, loved burning the sky,  
loved the night that Kyran's  
black hair once streamed through.  
I return home by eleven.

## Making the Bed

Now I come to the lap of your hair  
where I have permission to set aside  
knowing and let my fingers plow  
the unbreakable waves of your reddish  
weave. Past care, our sides curve  
new grottos from our crossing:  
you pile pillows high, mine thin  
and low, levying us together.  
Stars seep from the blanket  
that homes our bodies this night,  
embroidered by your grandmother's  
hand. Stilted up by stained wood  
from Black Mountain trees, our bed-frame  
was planed my stepmother's father,  
where now our cats crouch seeking  
ear-press. Like jelly from the best jar,  
our shadows thread these cedar walls.  
We read into the gallop of the night,  
tossed books babbling the floor,  
towers of mystery and Zen.  
Solace I once sought in the dark bend  
of trees and planks of water,  
flows in the quiet around us.  
Whispering toward sleep,  
as day-breath blurs and mixes  
in the bowl of this bed, I curl  
into the hearth of your ear.

**Down the Way,  
Worms and Roots Break the Plow**

Beneath ravines of bleached autumn  
clouds, we walk over-grown acres' spill.  
Late sun drizzles down thorns  
that spine locusts, syrups  
hedge-apples thronged in crannies.  
We break through trees—lines turned lair—  
which once hemmed cows' and aunts' sighs  
as they threaded another quilt row.

Shielded from a drunk hunter's glance,  
today we wear bright orange wool  
caps, saying "We don't belong."  
We push through clumps of shrubs  
and scrambled roots; puckered leaves  
cling to our wool like doe whisper.

## To breath a weeping fire

(Standing outside a Kentucky Parking Lot, waiting for Paul,  
in the vest he brought from China)

I am looking in every car  
as if there is a man inside  
who might be from Korea.  
They pause when they feel my glance  
to consider where they are from  
and ask themselves why  
they cannot be from Seoul;  
they never give me a ride.

They gray sky curls behind my back.  
I have sat in all the trees behind this lot.  
I wait with my breath.

From the contact of eyes  
rubbing like sticks,  
smoke rises.

Dragons curl.  
dragons continue.

Their moist bodies  
hardly glow,  
but when a flare catches,  
people point  
at the vest I wear,  
at the Chinese dragon drug across  
the seas, which lies  
upholstered to my hide.

To stand cloaked in an organ  
of flame and be with one's breath  
is to wallow in the flash-seed  
of observation which  
my dun green heart has studied.

As I stand against this gray  
sky, so you stood and will stand  
in California, in Seoul, waiting  
for your friend's return:

oak tree, elm tree,  
maple burning orange,  
teach me to stand  
in your weeping fire.

## Grand Ma Gravy

I drive all morning  
before I see a giant chicken  
squatting on the building,  
and I know I've found the diner  
I've been aching for.  
I don't want McDonald's,  
McThis, McThat,  
unless her name is McGrandMa.

I want a Grand Ma  
whose biscuits are  
for hire; someone  
who can fry sausages  
in a black skillet  
as if she'd always been waiting  
for me to walk in and just  
set my bottom down.  
Okay, so I don't eat meat,  
but I want a G-Ma who  
knows the name of grease,  
waiting spatula in hand  
by the roadside to serve  
me up some down-and-dirty  
thick-n-greasy  
pepper-strewn steamin' hot gravy.  
I want a grandma who'll smile  
when I sit myself down and fill up  
my cup of coffee again & again,  
so every ten minutes down the road,  
I'm going to have to pee so bad  
I could water a farmer's barely field  
with nitrogen enough to keep  
it greenified for a thousand  
greenhouse agro-industry  
top-soil depleting years. . .

Yeah, I want a Grand Ma who's  
middle name is gravy, who knows  
how to lock up the grid iron  
with pancakes so thick  
a hockey squad could skate  
on the butter; this Grand Ma,  
I mean, you had better do her

right 'cause after eating  
one square slice from the  
tied hock of her mean salted  
countrified ham,  
what your lips kiss,  
well, deer will lick it!  
I mean, her salty pucker  
would drive a man's heart  
right into the wrinkles  
of Grandpandom.  
There's a reason  
that grandpas bite  
the dust, so I'm looking  
for a Grand-Ma whose  
cooked herself  
through a squadron  
of old liver worts,  
through a damn baker's dozen  
with more geezers in line  
ready to get served up  
with her next batch  
of lard-laden biscuits  
that her 28 grandsons  
can't never get enough of.  
And her own sons?  
Well, their bellies jiggle  
over their size 46" jeans,  
and they got belts  
with their mom's name  
engraved on the buckle.  
You bet you, when  
I spy that gray top Grandam,  
hands perched on her hips,  
who's been cookin'-n-scrappin'  
all early morning for my greasy  
delight, I'm slamming  
on those breaks and skidding  
right on down next to her menu  
of love, fork in hand,  
mouth salivating like the stream  
that used to run wild and low  
behind her grandpa's home  
when she was but a child.

## Forward:

This is an essay about a society of teeth,<sup>1</sup>  
The words that floss them and keep them clean,  
The hot throats where words rise from.  
It is about me and you and how I come to you,<sup>2</sup>  
It is about what goes on in the stomach.  
It is about the tired eye's beating against  
intonation.<sup>3</sup>  
It is about measuring  
what lies in the vast unsuspecting palm of child.<sup>4</sup>

## End Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> We are always in and moving,  
drawing with charcoal on walls  
the fast and dented lace of our magnetic days.  
We hold our ionized hands into  
the scrapped piles of steel:  
pictures form we must have seen  
but have not. And our bodies  
are gilded with the tale of this:  
the labyrinth of release.

<sup>2</sup>O, these pure and senseless monks,  
knowless of the flocks of wings  
arising from the mouths' morning ponds.

<sup>3</sup> She snaps the carrot open like a vein,  
entering the sound of lunch  
into the house. She touches skin  
in the same way: opening everything  
to the fear that it might not ever  
close again.

<sup>4</sup> These words slough/ off my legs/ like an old shell/ or leaves that were left/ on an oak in spring:/ these  
poems are left/ in the smell of my tracks.// I have dreamed myself/so loudly he will never go away!// I scoop  
and brush the flakes of hair/ and specks of dandruff// into a pile and light them/ into the darkness of the river/  
where I have come from.