

*Marine*

A picnic boat glides across the waterway  
and when the light hits it turns  
into Egyptian gold.

There's beauty everywhere.

I follow it around like a man  
chasing pike in a kayak.

August triggers alarums,  
paint won't dry electricity shuts down  
the sun doesn't move.

Get a jump on the hump of it,  
guilt carried off by bicycle to the dump.

Look at the beach  
and then look at the beach.

Teetering between the personal and the universe  
or simply unnerved by the crazy beauty  
of this green world and by what  
miracle I remain under it  
enveloped in these garlands  
of shivery light.

The clouds were pink as Korean nails tonight  
the sun went down a fraction sooner  
ocean shining like an insect's back  
or the black diamond light  
of limos waiting for criminal bankers.  
This is how the dark gets in the door

New moon slim as a butcher's blade  
the Chinese stove housed  
the flames of a wood fire,  
apple and maple burning upward,  
“go up, little smoke”  
make me a place in the pagoda Gautama,  
I'll wear my kimona and behave with grace.  
August's equatorial heat makes the yeast rise  
before the bread, like art before technique  
age before beauty sense before rhyme  
the branch knocking at the window  
in the night a Morse code message  
from under the world.

The garden in darkness, no moon,  
fireflies signalling from the four quarters  
hovering over the damp grass  
and my glasses catching a flash  
of light sent from the deep blue yonder.  
Who calls out my name?  
What creatures out there  
see me in their dreams?  
The silence between tracks  
knocks against my ears  
grass pressing my face  
cool as the cat's fur  
coming in from the night  
the great joy inside everything  
waiting to be tapped out  
like sugar from a spoon.

Morning light coming toward me through  
‘fields of corn where Troy once stood.’  
The first cup of coffee opens the inner eye  
but the second one floods the mechanism.  
blueberry, violet, aqua marine  
tourmaline smooth as  
a stone beneath the tongue.  
The nerves remain on the inside now,  
light pours in from far out in the Atlantic  
a righteous light shimmering like the pearls  
looped round your swansong neck.  
Some garden variety god embedded in it,  
or god of the floating world  
shares this sunflower splendor  
leaves already spinning from the walnut tree,  
a hawk drifting at high altitude  
as I stand among flowers, eating figs,  
black cat nuzzling bare leg.  
Life is good, even with your tongue cut out.  
Later, under cover of the night  
the sky slides down into the sea.  
Sappho says, “Do not move stones.”  
hard words soften at the edges  
to form a curve that moves  
to the next line and binds it into the last.  
Lingo bangs around the page  
like rain clunking on a roof, or bats  
colliding with a wall in a storm,  
their echolocation washed out by weather.  
Children in cornfields unafraid  
of what came out of the dark waved  
long sticks tied with rags and  
the bats arrived like Messerschmitts

examining the shaken air  
everything benevolent even  
when the dog disappeared  
or a neighbor died on his first  
motorcycle and the wreck  
stood in his parents' yard for months,  
bent chrome gleaming in winter sunlight.

*A Face in the Crowd*

Somewhere a man is standing in line for the movies  
while designing a landmine that looks like a child's toy.  
Why should he be allowed to live on this planet?  
That scientist who said her brain was as big as a planet,  
her presumption made me laugh,  
a grain of truth embedded in it like a hurricane  
will embed a sliver of straw in a fencepost.  
Truth, beauty, and coffee in the morning  
as the sun rises miraculous, what else is there?