

where the bus shifts into low gear and begins to climb
and goes over the crest of the hill closed in the smoke of its oil

plainly
in this shadow
the image of her substituted body
grows arms and legs
rounds them over with fine hairs
and the body can walk out in snowstorms
beyond the treeline where no Indian comes:
at the coast: murdering the animals with deadfalls
further up in the hills the pit dug for the hooves:
cigarette smoke in the crowded room
a true commonwealth, mingled, becoming one:

only that
beyond the tree line
the track of their feet buried under new snow
that they passed this way
three days to cover up their droppings
three days of powdery snow stuff on their trail

moving quickly: about the same time

Havre de Grace

Over the Susquehanna
broadening into Chesapeake

the boat with square-cut sail
under the bridge
over the widening waters
tacking into the sun across
channels:
mud from upriver
as far as the lake country
west branch or the main stream
in Pennsylvania or New York
where: I would set out my plumb lines:
I want to establish a republic without mothers

look: I am offering this as a last resort
if you can't escape we can escape you:
mother not knowing daughter
forgetful of that ribbon of blood you
wear around your skull: look
at that cold still exaggerated night,
snow on your coat: your legs sticks
stuck in frozen slush: look I am
offering a wall that only you can tear down

this snowball sovereign against the powers of the moon

to channels: blue water of the bay
the faint green water at the shore
green water and brown weeds inches under the
surface:

set up a commonwealth on the other side

wooden houses wooden trees a firehouse
hidden marriages of the earth
bright beginnings of blue sky
the gestures we make in the rock

we can play house anywhere like coming
home at the end of a hot river and have
a cup of gravel the doublemint leaves
stuck to your face frost on the wooden cup
and call it Havre de Grace
stuck up over a river surrounded by
Queen Anne's lace o it is easy enough
to talk about Queen Anne's lace and you
up there in the snow of summer
in New York: far from rivers:
head buried deep in the ground and Queen
Anne's lace shoulder high growing

a statue of a Northern general
bluebonneted under the waves
and roots: take these roots
and the wild berries
shoulders into the ground
she is plucked out

all this motion related to railroads
and on the train:
looking out at new Maryland

water, your house
(flower: black-eyed susan)
the wind blows

crazily in the gravel
the box car: O God a box
car: heeled over, crumpled
half on the tracks

Going

If you ever get there
where I have been once or
twice before, running in
summers with no sleep

under iron bridges, the
eddy around me, curve
of blackwillow bank
around me lying at bottom

looking up at the river's
skin, shadows of fish
in the sun and no whispers,
under wooden bridges

rumbling under the Fords
sifting dust into that
coolness of underbridge
striped with sunlight

God I love you all and
don't want you to be there
under the blue skin
itching in shallow grass

no thought in your minds
but to measure those
distances, counting
in pores of sunburnt skin

and tell me you're there
in inches and feet and
how very far away, easily
that much further away.

MARRIAGE RITES

Hold out both hands
with sapphires for the setting sun
stars to the darkened sky
pine cones to the god of the dead

and offer the gaudy grave
birds frozen in crystal earth
fire in the tunnels of the pine cone
burning under the golden water
the silence of the falling tree
silence of the nova in sapphire
silence of the sun swallowed

to the radiated bones dead under blue branches
in the spaces where wasps move under bare roots
in the buzz of pine needles falling to the living ground

'THIS VISIBLE WORLD SEEMS FORMED IN LOVE'

At nightfall the staggering vision

everything closer

but God the sound of it distantly
always another string to be plucked

the chords

could go on forever

given the pitch the unchangeable

A

the sound of strings from distant gardens
how can this be enough

or going down to the pool

the toy sailboat shipwrecked under the fountain's spray

the sails drenched

bowsprit snapped into the ripple

boat capsizes

and the ripples come to the rim of the pool

the whole ship and its gallant rigging

motionless under the clear water

or the priest in wide sleeves his shoulders flowering in silk

there in the fish in the red scales of the

kite flying away

over the Hudson

from the highest point on the island

white strings stuck in the air

here lies

what a travesty of a tomb
not in a far off garden not hidden in grass
not in a voice crying out there he is there

o world my lamb cut open into throat's darkness

saying

here I am Lord

if it breaks up into usable parts

spit it out

at every moment something approaches

it is here: it is now

in the air

time the mountain finally scaled

the unfailing oxygen at its peak

now

rejoice in this lamb

the condition of freedom in the butcher's hands

I leave it to your own mercy

and on the mercy of the lamb

alone they depend

the roaring fire in his fleece not

remembered

meek: chew: cud: a lamb

in the grass of pure

faith: don't

depend on it: I leave it to you

not a game of mercy

It snows and snow keeps falling
porphyry
the darkness of stone
porphyry that seemed to be on fire
come sangue che fuor di vena spiccia
the step of love
the red flame
blood spurts from the
veined rock
and this third step was darkest

around the entrance: panels
sheets of stone polished
for the long legs for the cloud belted with thunder
the forehead pressed against it
beads of sweat running down the nose and the stone
the mirror of blood
to: reflect

it is here
again: it is here

it is time we stopped celebrating
usable things
stepping into the immediate darkness

what we can use
does not matter
enough that it is here

and when the Shechinah falters
the presence of God
bowed down to the ground
: the ground itself
in the red dust of cemeteries
the stone shroud the stone cross
red dust covering the stone angel
do not go out
the presence of God stumbling
along in the darkness of wheatfields
held up by palm leaves in the hotel
floors and corridors of the tribe
and who will clean the ritual bath
the pool trembling between our knees
elevators cutting through time
and on the empty step
God the basin
the hollow throat
bleeding on the floor of the hotel
polished stone
the lamb sacrificed in the lobby
in the presence of the people
in the presence of God