

Burn

"I feel like a man,"
said my ex-wife,
"who's discovered his wife
stirring a pot innocently in Salem
when she turns,
sees my shock, and says,
'What? I'm boiling herbs.'"

Oh! I loved her again
for the flashing double edge
of her unsheathed words
when she turned,
saw my love, and said,
"How could you be
so fucking stupid?"

Mountain Road Morning

(para mamá -- que descanses en paz)

The pond exhales into the chilly air
her ghost gray breaths, her quaking hedges, where
uncertain children hold her liquid hand,
and ask: "What happens if we disappear?"

In washed rock arms, her breath drifts sleepy still
through slender birch and bearded crag, and drags
a dream from great forgotten stones that speak
the murmured language of her ancient home.

But oh! The sun! Oh bright surprising child!
You clamber up that bison's shaggy mane,
and spill yourself upon shy steeples stuck
in naked fields that beam within your shameless glow.

Walking Prayer

O Maker!

Who made

 who remade

 who is

 remaking me

 make me become

 what I am.

Make me be

 walking earth,

 unmade like

 brown trees

 brown grass

 brown leaves

that turn

 like now

 everything turns

 brown

 the quiet color

 of returning.

Nature Trail

A secret spot,
 an icy bank,
 a frozen pond,
 tall pines,
 alone. Perfect,

I thought. I noticed
 I hoped to see -- like Mary Oliver --
 a hawk, an owl, a fox, or
 some other secret shape of God.
 I saw nothing. Nothing

of God. Only frail reeds
 rising from the ice. Only quiet trees
 swaying in the sky. Only faint tracks
 now filling slow
 with falling snow.

Gravity

I've lived
 twenty-thousand odd days.
Most I've trashed
 like old journals.
A few I remember
 like shards shaken from shattered dreams

Walking today among the dead
 three men dug a fresh hole.
Earth's supposed to be soft,
 yet they sweated in the winter air
with a backhoe, with a jackhammer
 pounding at the abiding ground.
Only then did one get in the grave
 to scrape out meager crumbs of dirt.

How could I have lived
 twenty-thousand odd days
and never once seen
 how hard the earth can be
to move, what is required
 to make a place to rest?