

Paris, December 2000

Autumn's vibrant leaves scattered the walkway,
Waltzing around our feet as we strolled past.
And the cold air,
It pierced the Italian cashmere coat you were wearing.
We stopped for a moment
and stood above the water, looking down as the currents rushed by,
Carrying vacationing families to their planned destinations
and fishermen to their docks.
We could hear the carousel's melody in the distance,
And drivers rushed past us,
Speeding in their foreign cars to get home
to lovers, to children,
to evenings spent in small, ancient apartments.
We gripped coins in our mittened hands,
Money left over from a hot meal of croque monsieurs and frites
at the smoky café we discovered on Passy that afternoon.
We turned around with our backs facing the river
and closed our eyes as we wished private thoughts
we knew somehow included each other.
We tossed our dreams over our heads
and watched as they hit the water and were swallowed whole
by the rushing Seine,
barely a splash rising behind them.
And as we watched the wildness of the racing current
and imagined where our coins might eventually settle,
We each secretly realized
our future had in some way been changed by that moment,
and you looked over and smiled.

Not This

How was it that we used to be so happy with nothing?
\$45 in a checking account that was never abundant,
your spiced-up Ramen noodles for dinner and a \$7 bottle of red
kept us warm and full of ideas to argue
until thoughts of tomorrow's early class forced us to bed.
How is it that life has changed us so?
\$45 is now cause for panic and emergency,
and much more alcohol is needed to produce yesterday's effects.
Few and far between are the mornings of luxuriating in bed until guilt kicks us out,
and Responsibility is a looming figure that has taken from us our carefree, youthful play.
The Frisbee is somewhere tucked away in our boxed-up college papers
and when I drive by our old house, our presence has left no mark.
Your sunflowers are gone,
The tire tracks from a car long sold have faded away.
Why can't the little bit we had then bring the same joy now?
And at what point did I become this consumer of more, more, more?
I'm racing down this 6-lane autobahn
When all I really want is the slow, country gravel road.

Enlightenment

Oh, that you would touch me in ways that would ignite my spirit
and arouse the deepest, most dormant passion.
That your hands would slide over the curve of my waist into my hips,
And that the fragrance of my body would find itself on your lips.
Would I then,
after seeing my reflection in the light of your eyes
and being wrapped up in the warmth of your arms,
know heaven?
I imagine you might play the length of my body,
As I imagine a great musician might--
mastering every rhythm,
every change.
piano,
forte,
piano.
tenderly,
seductively,
lovingly.
Whispered words on my thigh,
A discerning hand traveling the length of my back
Discovering softness and undulation beneath you.
And then a gasp
and consciousness stirred for the first time.

Spent Love

Spilled candle wax
hardened on the nightstand,
a discarded skirt and tossed heels lying on the floor,
your shirt draped over the bedpost,
my bare arm draped over you.
Remnants of memories we made
in the early hours of the morning,
when dew is thick on the grass
and dreams of
bigger homes,
prettier wives,
gentler husbands,
fill the void of sleeping cities.

Eufaula Fall

The autumn breeze drifted through the cracked window
and lifted the diaphanous drapes.
They waved and flitted in the brisk Oklahoma air,
alive and young and playful
as if unaware that just outside,
the leaves struggle, clinging to life:
fierce yellow,

furious red,
battling the cyclical retreat to dormancy--
their temporary hibernation.
And as I look at you,
asleep beside me,
I'm humbled by the realization
that one day the leaves' struggle will be my own,
and I will not win.