

## Ten Chisels

she calls to say the flight landed  
fidgeting with hair strands  
the reflection on screens  
brought closer by a magnitude of ten

it isn't enough, yet  
the words bounce back with no flesh  
to penetrate and take hold  
the capitulation of syntax

I'm trying  
to dissolve glass and wire  
with decaying speech  
a jar of vegetable tools

they run down, swollen  
onto keys. I watch  
the letters  
fractured and distant from sense

such arrangements, such geometry  
for her to know  
what pyramid is my love  
what sphere

translation fails me  
the alphabet remains intact  
pulsing, electric on  
plain white back

rivulets in stone, lines  
blur my mother's face  
ten chisels  
-- her poem

**Whitecap**

*for Joyce Carol Oates*

the clouds today resemble  
frozen whitecaps

enid's playing trumpet again  
in the room next door

she can't stop, the brass so reassuring -  
the keeper of the shelter, not the cage

her teeth and tongue  
press gently against the instrument's opening

configuring vibrations that  
roil and froth

past the cat in the doorway,  
the boy just out of frame

looking up  
tossing his softball from left to right

sand and seawater collect themselves  
in murky puddles around enid's feet

inside the periscoped ears of the boy

the cat

and the shapes inside: a music stand, an asymmetrical longing

a whitecap

### **Kevlar Vest**

on evenings when the wind picks up

the grass imagines itself a snake

the swingset a bird

the parking lot a sky

each ripple of what came before

comes sliding out,

like puzzle pieces from the box

chattering softly

together on tabletop

led by yellow-tinted fingers

some smokiness

a hint of wine

accreted like the rainforest floor

fertile and awakened

to the possibility of insect, cat and frog

all alike

the thing itself

(and not the myth)

might startle --

catch its breath

imagining  
a tarmac road  
kevlar vest  
or stick of dynamite

### **Bluff City Blues**

the corners of the Lorraine feel  
rough on the tongue  
tastebuds plumbing for deep iron - a gash  
paved over after that first, rancid infusion

alongside: his plastic, blinkering light  
neon and expectant from its perch across the city  
where ships of men and women rock gently  
on midday street corners

eyes lifted to the beacon  
waiting  
fixated and breathless  
for the instruction to disembark

### **For the Sunset**

lift every voice and  
  
sing, lifted, every voice and  
voice every voice all  
lift all sing all scream all

teeth all diaphragm all  
darkened closets and heavy breath  
with no one to hear, to tell -

frozen when the lights come on,  
cockroach-eyed and head in the  
crease of the doorjamb.

your desire  
pounding from the next room over  
not passing through walls  
by a dice roll - a crooked ache -  
in fingers loosely clenched.

hush now, be still, too  
much, too fast, too full

OH

it's the sky at 7:06pm on the 35th parallel -  
it's lines, all lines, caressed into  
astride hips without success

too sure. too enamored with themselves. no room

waves instead, anarchy instead - lift!  
lift every voice

arching higher  
bracing frantic, sweaty palms  
against the roof

the sky