

At the Garden Store

The seed racks display
a palette of colors.
Sunflowers, bachelor's buttons,
basil, California poppies:
emblazoning their pictures on
packets, hopeful kernels
waiting to blossom in the earth.

The succulents, including air plants,
are cool and rubbery in pots or glass
tubules. The hand tools
(cultivators, spades, and weeders),
await the force of the gardener's elbow grease,
await the earth they will dip into.

The sprouted plants are outdoors —
tomato and rosemary, lavender,
onion, Mexican sage.
Then there is the soil, bagfuls
created by worms, mixed with
diatomaceous earth.

But only the seasoned gardener knows
the way these plants will curl
around the fences
and cling to
the porch spindles,
bushing, growing ever more fragrant
with time.

Highway One

To either side of the road,
a lush, low grass grows,

lit the color of emerald
by the sinking sun.

Cars rush by.
Cypress spreads its arms

between here and
the gray-blue sea.

A thousand feet away, beyond the jetty,
the headlands stand proud,

ordering the water to throw its
body up and retreat.

Meditation

At five o'clock, when summer sun
comes through my window pane,
I go out to the balcony
and ease my furrowed brain.

I light a stick of incense,
and crack a Buddhist book,
and sit where I see Buddha, too;
his statue's in a nook.

And sometime in the hour,
I put the book aside;
my eyes grow peaceful, staring out
at how the paint has dried;

I first begin to lose the time,
and then begin to play,
and then cease to be "I" at all:
black wood; slats of gray.

And Once Again, The Ocean

And once again, the ocean
—its foam with pitted pores
like lacy alveolae—
comes churning into shore.

In just that single instant,
the sea grasps out for land
as if the thinness of its reach
articulated hands.

I sometimes come to see you
in such a mode as this,
as though by whispering forth one day
I could retain your kiss.

Alice Neal's *Nadya and the Wolf*

The night comes when
the forest swallows you whole.

Bewildered, bare-legged,
you find the trees and their shadows
towering above you
like orant witches in the fog.
Here walks the wolf, with teats as
hard as fangs and
fangs as sharp as granite,
the hunger
in her eyes a kind of anger
that can't see you
except for your tissue.
You sit on the ground anyway,
exhausted.
You wonder: if wolves described humans,
what would they say?

"Those who have the hunger
to claim a companion..."

"Those who enter forests
looking for dogs..."