

## One Morning

I woke to find the Straits of Gibraltar  
under my pillow. Your absence.  
The Yangtze River turned up in a shoebox.  
When I unfolded the tablecloth, out dropped Cape Horn.  
Come back, I prayed.  
The Arctic tundra fell from the dictionary.  
Patagonia turned up on the woodpile.  
The Loire Valley appeared  
in the flour tin, the road  
up Mt. Fuji in the laundry hamper.  
I slept fitfully and could barely swallow.  
It doesn't matter now why you left  
and returned. Light continuously travels here  
all the way from Betelgeuse and Deneb.  
Even when we can't see  
or don't look, consolations  
are never small. I still  
taste the nothingness  
on your lips, and in the smell  
of your skin, find salt  
and cinnabar and tuber.

## Latest Revision

I've kept it the year I was eleven  
and my yellow dress

but I've erased the face of the man  
who approaches me while I'm swinging.

The swing is a replacement for another place  
which will remain private and I still might find

something even better. Meanwhile I've patched in  
a helpless mouse for what he showed that I didn't

want to see. And before he said them  
I've taken the words from his mouth and flung

them down. Ditto the weather and the time of day.  
November late afternoons are mine again.

Mine again the sharp air and the cobalt light.  
I restore the beat of my heart to its slow cadence.

How leisurely and with what ease I lift  
my bicycle and pedal away.

Italy, 1972

A few thousand kilometers and a minor ocean  
north of the chaos of war, I stood contemplating  
the framed oils I'd read about in school,  
close enough to touch illuminated faces,  
plates of grapes, terraced gardens.  
And I strolled among orchards  
that had borne fruit for centuries.  
My last dollars in that simmering July  
I exchanged for lira at the border, and the last  
of those I spent on a paper cone of lemon ice.  
Held in the clamor of the angelus of St. Mark's,  
my bench surrounded by a flock of pigeons,  
I stopped to let that citrus crush melt on my tongue.  
I was a child of plenty.  
More had always come.  
Did it matter that I had no idea  
how black my night would be, and then  
how full of stars?  
Already, strangers must have been petitioning  
for my deliverance, for I saw them pass me  
disguised as citizens, purposefully moving  
between market and sanctuary,  
saw them linger with prayers to spare  
in the bodies of birds.

## In the Free Box

A stuffed bear with one eye  
sits upright against the broken toaster oven.  
Set by the road, the cardboard that holds  
them has seen a few rains. What's left  
after the good things have been taken  
interests me. I have to glance in.  
I want that rare feeling of not wanting.  
For a while when the grief of your  
passing was still new, I had it.  
I rode all around town on that slow pony.  
How rich I felt, clinging to her back.

## Blue Question, Green Answer

Will you stay with me to the waterfall?  
Will you hold me when the roaring begins?  
Will you let the ashes of our letters go?  
Will you bind us, at the end, to the raft?  
Don't answer.  
Winter licks the hill.  
This hill: young animal—fox or cat.  
Don't try to count how many times she'll wake.  
A thousand thousands, each occasion  
to breathe what's new.  
Now: the line that hasn't come to me.  
Earth that has yet to tickle the filaments  
in the nostrils of the secret animal.