

## ***Triage***

Yes, there are days when the ER doors explode  
and Code Blue comes in on a gurney, rapid  
crosstalk over the patients, one right after  
another. More often though,  
we triage our lives with quiet, glancing  
deferments of care, attention, faith, for whatever  
needs us and cannot be ignored and left  
to die. We have no choice but to choose  
among these three — money, the people we love  
and our inner life, such as it is. We can save  
the one, maybe two out of three, but nobody  
I've seen has it all. The math doesn't work that way,  
though one might serve another, the church  
of parenthood, perhaps, or creativity  
that pays the bills. But marriages can fail  
in the face of sudden money.  
We can fall in love as our business  
fades, or drive down avenues  
of accomplishment, so proud and blind.  
We can die before we die.  
We can hold our breath for years  
and do, our dreams growing beautiful  
as autumn leaves, golden and forgotten.

We can find what feeds us in triage, an ascending  
crisis of opportunities, thinking like nurses  
and ER doctors, fast and wise  
as much as possible, trying to live one life  
as we save others.

## ***Perfect Corporations***

Corporations are people, too,  
numbers with skin.

Like people, they have dreams.  
Like people, they can ache and grow  
and have that growth cut short,  
wounded, and then survive  
to consume or be consumed by others.  
Like people at times, they have  
no choice, and the better ones have come to believe  
that people, natural people, are frictions,  
that the best corporations are heaven on earth  
as the earth drops away, trailing numbers,  
human capital liquefied  
and refined, the corporate body  
reorganized by cold explosions leaving  
a cloudy taste  
and empty cubicles filled with light.

The perfect corporations are the ones  
with nobody left, breathless and calm. The ones  
that have no soul.

## ***Too Big to Fail***

The sky is filled with brokers jumping from windows,  
some holding hands as they step off together,  
showers of suits and ties that flutter  
through crashing markets, debt bombs  
going off in the bundled securities wrapped  
and bleeding through layers of gauze,  
20 years of financial assumptions collapsing  
like circus tents on fire, the elephants screaming, old lions  
roaring in outrage as the furious band plays on,  
and the bodies keep falling faster,  
racing to the final moment, the slap  
and explosion of meat  
pounding the sidewalks and then  
they touch down  
gently, as if  
on a well of bubbling energy.

“You’re safe,” the dancing master says.  
“You’ll always be safe. It’s like a love affair  
with gravity. Look at what you’ve already become  
and what that means. You’ve made a killing.  
Banks are immortal, in their way,  
and so, in a way, are you.”

## ***How Much Does Your House Weigh?***

Somewhere in the middle of marriage,  
we did the math. Two hundred pounds  
per square foot times twenty nine hundred  
square feet. That's five hundred eighty  
thousand pounds, three hundred tons almost  
we carried on wings. For twenty years  
the rooms were filled with children, noisy, unmindful  
about the future, as was their right. We gave them  
memories, and you filled the backyard with roses,  
antiques from abandoned cemeteries, bred  
to survive alone, Heaven on Earth, Rêve d'Or,  
Belinda's Dream, and a marriage bed  
of Icebergs, white and burgundy.  
We raised the boys in the middle  
class of expectations. I taught them to fly,  
wobbly on their bicycles, how to drive, how to leave  
home someday while you would show them  
how to stay in love. This was our calling,  
the art of effacement except for the home  
you made and the house I strained to support,  
and under it all a thin, insinuation of debt  
corrupting our slab foundation.  
"This debt is a cancer," you said,  
and you were right. I made a mistake

when I married you, and your mistake

was to marry me. We did the math,  
and we're both bad at numbers.  
But what counts more — planting a tree  
or writing a poem? Writing a book  
or raising a child? Somehow the boys grew up  
and away, now fine young men, and now we carry  
half the weight with a smaller house, though  
even that might be too much. Tonight,  
I see us in a Liberty Belle, a bomber  
from World War II, coming back from a night raid.  
I'm not a pilot but I'm flying this thing,  
your hand on mine as my hand rests on the throttle.  
We've taken hits, the plane bucks and shivers,  
air whistling through the cabin, smoke  
trailing from one of the engines,  
almost out of fuel, on a glide path  
downward across the divided Channel,  
your hand on mine, the both of us still working,  
pressing to reach some green,  
imaginary and ultimate England.

## ***Becoming Air***

Slow pounding on the door  
downstairs, a lower, steady sound  
more felt than heard, month  
after month for a year,  
then almost two, now growing,  
filling the massive house  
where my sister waits  
in her flying bed, exhausted,  
with a painted battle scene above her head,  
historic men on horseback, swords waving, charging  
always toward victory.  
Then a faint click.  
Greatness enters the room,  
pauses, as if questioning,  
and offers a white flower. At last,  
after years of framed achievement,  
anger and controlling love,  
she sighs, burning fragments  
cradled in the arms of pure death,  
and together they descend with dignity,  
intimate all the way down  
the amazing stairs.