

Lovely Cause of Death

to take Poe's death
as something other; the final

visage, our beloved
poet's head hovering
loosely above the table,
a shaft of hair brushing
his brow, his mind in a lovely stupor

to set
things straight, they replaced
a century old romance-
rabid cats slinking, drooling rivers or

picture a pilot poet,
a former gunner
in the war, my professor
burned up in his favorite chair,
no doubt holding a flaking cigarette
in one hand, the other gripping
his glass of gin. His frame,
naked and steaming;
in the style of Ingres,
smoldering wet into evening,

Hanging Around

It wasn't the first thing that I heard-
about the bar where she met
her husband to be,
that set in my mind, but

It was the first thing
that I saw, there
gathering around the jambs of their doors
where the bedroom and kitchen connected.

Hanging around
in a casual, but somewhat intentional huddle-
maybe 30, 40 wine bottles.
But who would save them?
I couldn't figure out why,
and I wondered, wouldn't they smell?

That wasn't so odd
as the fact that she and her ex
talked everyday, even from roofs
of museums in Europe
where he traveled alone;
she never left her apartment
on the upper West Side,
except, of course, when she went
to a bar after work.

I couldn't figure out why,
on a Saturday,
yes, a sunny, normal Saturday,
we were the only ones there-
ex-wife, her husband to be, ex-husband and I,
hanging off stools
downtown
in a trendy SOHO bar.

Picnic Drum Lesson

upon finishing our drum lesson on the lawn,
we left our circle of orange plastic buckets
to meditate quietly by themselves

“come here” the teacher beckoned,
“let me tell you”-he sat
and bent his gaze to stare at his hands
folded on the picnic table

“let me tell you about my friend” -
his hands, his drum stick holding feats
of technical sophistication of human body parts,
told the tale

“now let me tell you,” they said
to my daughter with leukemia
and me, “he had a transplant too
-a double lung.”
So, I ask, “you mean two,
like both hands, touching
in prayer to a God who dishes
out disease and tosses endless coins?”
“he threw,” he said
“Clorox on some mold-it blew
right back and went
deep into his lungs” I knew
this burn, but “no,” he said,
“the mold did the job-the lungs,
totally destroyed..” the mold
hatched and burst deep inside
the lowest part and grew
wildly out from there

my daughter paid
close attention as her mind
roamed and touched splintered boards
of the table, yet, her hands
did not move an inch

Crows at Summit

Onyx figures I watch here,
planted loosely in circles-
some angled from center, a few
adjusted slightly aside
on the lawn near the dam

Gathered in Surry,
stand tall on grass
in shiny self-assertion,
and contemplate all the world.

How steady the crows
balance their feet and views,
lift and cross dark forests,
and plunge into trees.

It comes to me- how careless,
irate our own gathering bodies
focus on maelstrom
no one can put a finger on.

My thoughts are simple.
I curve and move
cautiously down the road.

I Could Rest with Stars

*Nighttime was a full moon pitted with craters-
for centuries the moon and stars alone
shone on nightscape salamanders in the road-
for centuries the moon and stars were our night*

*I could rest with stars safely delivered by dusk-
things took on a hush on our farm vacation, Ohio,
down the freeway from our hurricane fences
held in garages-my barn now
sat nearby and woke with me*

*The strongest flavor to enter my windows
as I drifted to sleep- manure racing in from fields
I came to love as the sweetest part of cows
out in the night cuddled somewhere, in a bay,
or upright in slumber, on hay they ate and stood on,
grown into perfume under the moon*

*the light of nothing historic, but lowing
and sniffing softly over the corn
and swaying feathers of their tips*

*through the window, a cinnamon roll of stars
from the Milky Way wafted across my face on the pillow
in puffs of sweetest thoughts -tomorrow
a ride on the pony who jumps the ditch*