

## **At the Grave of Bobbie Bill**

What echoed agony lies muffled here  
from the shadowy decade before the war?  
What faint reverberations fill the spaces  
that stretch like clearcut hillsides  
between the voiceless messengers of Victorian statuary  
scattered around this pathetic patch of earth?

Why does your pain survive while you  
preserve naught but the browning coral form of the malignancy  
that scored you so?  
Why do I stand before you in mute fascination  
beneath the greying fog that dampens and chills the crenellated stones  
that stagger like refugees across these quiet Colma fields?

What is there left to find in the bone-racking shivers  
and senseless writhing of a seven-year-old child  
caught helpless by an uncaring accident of time?  
What but the vanished remains of torment once common,  
of parents bereaved, families sundered, careless anguish as blithe  
as the random downward drifting of spent autumn leaves?

I find nothing noble in your unmarked grave  
the vanishing remnants of your suffering but a grandparent's tale  
fading over generations;  
Yet drawn to your anonymous interment  
I listen, I hear the evanescent thrumming  
of the mourning that laid you to rest  
and take from that forlorn chorus  
the unsettled sense of mortal defiance  
that alone disdainful of death  
declaims that we do not as hapless victims  
blindly entomb such outrages  
but stand one by one in our turn  
in unspoken witness to that  
which cannot be borne away.

## Watching You

I watch you dressing in the morning routine  
frantic scramble never thinking for one moment  
of yourself as a focus of desire in that context  
of a rushing mother, working woman of the modern age  
& yet I watch you quietly with eyes that on a weaker man  
would ogle sweet young girls with thoughtless teenage urgency  
& yet I watch you dressing in the morning routine  
frantic scramble never thinking for one moment that  
I'm watching you thinking oh my god how rich can I be for all the chance encounters  
and relationships, for past unwelcome infatuations,  
youthful assignations and ten-second streetcar fantasies  
is it possible I should hope to find myself watching you  
now and every day;  
I hope to god that I stay living long enough  
to watch you always in our private space  
until impossibly aged eyes refuse to see that far  
and then I have to reach out as a sightless man and see you  
by my fingers tracing smooth the outlines of your face your breasts  
your hips which is really what I want to do all along.

## Étude

There came that fine moment  
when subcutaneous the fuck  
rendered delicate capillaries  
a sodden spongiform mass  
of stray corpuscles  
and microscopic bruising  
mottling muscles tautly stretched,  
transcribing in reverse  
such serene apoptosis,  
stilling in the end  
fingers that learned to play  
the sonata by D'Indy.

But God was he beautiful!