

## **The Flying Monas**

Working in my garden, the sound of a jet  
climbing or lowering, I think - there's Mona  
on her way or coming home.

Ten minutes later another plane, the same thoughts,  
her again, over this year's tomatoes.

She is on every plane, on all the planes, meeting  
herself again and again. Every plane  
full of Monas, leaving white trails,  
passing over my garden square, the Monas  
on their way somewhere.

And in case the neediest, saddest or loneliest  
Mona is thinking about me, sometimes  
I wave, as the silver plane gets small. Then  
one day, after I've given up every hope, observing the  
impossibility of love, after scolding myself

has lost its sting, on my knees pulling weeds  
I hear the sound of a jet, lift my eyes and see  
a white parachute's dome, tiny, swaying  
in the wind, descending toward  
this fertile, enduring earth.

## The Voice

The cemetery road.  
I was called upon to take Cousin Audrey  
to the graveside service. She had little to say.  
Her dark dress seemed to swallow her thoughts.  
We were midway in a line of cars,  
each with a funeral flag. Then

unexpected roadwork, orange cones and blinking lights.  
Diverted into a parking lot. Inching  
forward, the flagged caravan  
moved worm-like past  
shops and stores as the rain began.  
The windows fogged. We stopped

beside the loudspeaker of hamburger world.  
A garbled voice called to us from the other side,  
a bark of consolation. Yea,  
it said, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,  
or something like. I stared ahead.  
Audrey lowered and covered her face.

The Lord giveth and something something.  
Of course He does. It seems fair.

The rain fell harder.  
The wipers beat. But why are we here?  
What is a life, I thought, then  
remembered my sorrows, never far off.  
Hell from beneath is moved  
for thee to meet thee at thy coming. Yes,  
I suppose it is. My father's house  
has many mansions.

## the difference between flotsam and jetsam

over the side with the jetsam—not worth carrying anymore. It gets in the way—a tripping hazard. This you suspected years ago but found always a special, secret place to stow it, to bring it, to need it. Stuff with no tongue – it doesn't say good morning or I love you, not a wink or a purr or a touch—still withholding. The problem is that even when you throw the stuff overboard, some of it floats – and that, you see, is the flotsam.

what I have wondered is did she toss the poems? Eventually everything gets thrown out, gets waterlogged and sinks. A thousand verses litter the sea. The ink runs. Desire wades ashore in tatters. Love lost. More than a storm— a *tormenta*—then the sea like glass, empty.

or did she keep them? Folded, at the back of a shelf in the poet's area, behind the hats, me with the other fellow. In the deepest night, we whisper our stories box to box. There was a time, I say. Oh yes, I hear. There was a place. A drink, a laugh, a kiss. How many? Oh, I couldn't say, he lies. I held her hand. Oh? But not for long. I have a photo somewhere—in the half light of a half moon. We are brothers, I say. Half brothers, he says. And in case any of this matters, one day a small white hand comes for him and takes him, I think, to the river.

## **not the same old song and dance**

A Blackfoot Indian legend tells that the buffalo taught a maiden how to sing and dance in order to restore to life, year after year, the buffalo who were killed. This was a conception that the animals were willing to be killed, that there was a mystical covenant between the animal world and the humans, that it was sacred and required ceremony—singing and dancing. In the songs, the people talked to the animals. In the stories, the people married the animals. At some point, getting the songs and dances *exactly* right was the only way to keep the magic going.

I have spoken of this to the cereal and canned goods at the grocery. I've told it to the bread in their plastic bags. I have whispered to the apples and to the cheese. I have prayed in front of the deli counter. I have invented a small dance which, until recently, no one could see—heel, toe, slide left, spin around, change foot and repeat. I softly sing: natayo, kiaayo, sipistoo, ponokaomitaa. Close eyes, repeat, move to the next aisle. I awaken the food and the fathers and mothers of the food. I caress the jars, shake the pasta, rub the melons, praise the butter, and now

they have asked me to leave.

## ***The Dark***

Speaking only when you have something important to say –  
we call this *silence*.

Repeating the errors of our ancestors –  
we call this *normal*.

Attending the Methodist Church twice every year –  
we call that *religion*.

That day you took the belt away from your mother –  
we call that *an ending*.

What masqueraded as an affectionate graduation gift –  
we call that a *suitcase*.

Asking me if Janet was pregnant when I announced our engagement –  
we call that *conversation*.

A two-storey wooden house with high weeds and leaky windows –  
we call that *the home place*.

That day they blew taps at my father's grave –  
we call that *Wednesday*.

Waiting for something that probably won't happen –  
we call this *the future*.

That voice saying "I love you. You belong here" –  
we call that *the wind*.

Being afraid of something, not sure what –  
we call that *the dark*.