

## Two Teddies

My big brown bear,  
is a Gund bear, I think,  
He sits beside my bed  
leaning nonchalantly back  
and glowers across the room at  
the mirror above my easy chair.  
There all night, he has an ironic  
squint, a skeptic countenance,  
the look of an adult bear,  
I believe, a look that says,  
“I’ll wait and see about that.”

Beside him there’s another bear,  
smaller, not so dark,  
with a wide-eyed wondering face,  
The countenance of a child, I believe,  
with a bow-tie on its neck,  
in red checked with white.  
It’s a gift-bear from my wife  
that should, it seems to me,  
be a child’s chief delight.  
I sit them side-by-side, I think,  
to represent my life

## Mail

What goes into it comes out  
a letter, this poem, those bills,  
the check that is in....or not.  
The postal service,  
with its postman ringing twice,  
delivering what we want,  
or don’t, six days a week,  
metered mail (mostly junk),  
and stamped letters dropped  
into clunky blue boxes  
on ever fewer streets,

Like clockwork’s tick, tock;  
It’s another fading remnant

of our founding father's legacy,  
limping into this age of electronic mail.  
We call it "snail mail" now,  
slow and slithery, obsolescent  
faintly threatening  
in an age of instants,  
passing much too quickly through  
from anywhen to everywhere,  
too much to grasp or savor when  
impatience knows no bounds.

It's pages plucked  
from our frenzied rush,  
are moments stopped,  
awaiting the hand  
that reaches out to touch,  
with anticipation,  
whatever lies within  
It has come to us from someone,  
somewhere, somewhen,  
slipped in among the junk  
the ads and coupons we don't want  
obtrusive as a guest  
or that message we must read  
foreclosing our future,  
or bringing just desserts . . . .  
Just what we do not need,  
we think, or not  
when we contemplate  
the damage that's been wrought.

### **Stalking Egret**

Still,  
as a statue carved  
from the best Carrera marble;  
White, on black stilt legs  
in the water running off  
toward the blue Pacific,  
with his neck stretched out  
above the shallows where  
He stands

in the Santa Ana River,  
or every now and then  
takes a slow step toward  
where another fish might lie,  
Indifferent  
to the sun shining down,  
or to the heady stare  
of those eyes above him  
looking down  
Watching  
for that first sign of life,  
A twitch,  
or a fin's flicker,  
A minnow  
that he can stab and stop  
against the sandy flat,  
above the flying shadows  
of ripples moving on  
to the edge of things,  
toward that hint  
of transcendence left  
when wavelets die  
Unnoticed on the shore  
he stalks.

### **Texas Longhorns, 2010**

They do them up in bronze here  
in Cowtown, USA, longhorns,  
beef on the hoof bred tough enough  
to fight off panthers  
ticks, tornadoes, floods  
and the long drive north  
along the Chisholm trail to slaughter.  
They're the next best thing to bison,  
near extinction now,  
in America's mythic West  
but at home in our cowboy hearts.

Anachronous in this land of oil wells  
and the Barnett shale, they've been replaced  
by Black Angus steers, bred behind barbed wire,

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Indian Summer  
No Stanza Break

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shipped by truck to feedlots and efficient stockyards  
hidden from sight in the broken-down corners of our society  
where we now live years beyond our means  
in foreclosed neighborhoods, along rusty ribbons of steel  
and leaking pipelines under concrete highways bred  
years ago out of enterprise from the American Dream.

Throughout the great Midwest, our heartland,  
where values reign, unchallenged, and compassion  
eats the dust of America's fundamental myths  
revolution, independence, infinite expansion,  
captured in that dream of Tea Party injuns  
boarding merchant ships, destroying all they see.  
There's a straight but narrow road ahead  
shimmering in the heat of disasters looming --  
hurricanes, tornadoes, floods—stretching north  
to the horizon, as flat and featureless  
as our future without grace.