## July 2000. Mission Canyon Fire Safety Potluck

1964. Coyote Fire. You were three when you saw it burn through this canyon. 1977. Sycamore Canyon Fire. I was five when I watched it sweep up that hill.

This is fact - stark and bare.

It was not the meat of the conversation we started after the fireman's presentation on safety and prevention had given way to a disarray of talk among neighbors voicing well-versed opinions on the necessity of community brush clearings, traffic policing and the unwelcome, recently proposed, development.

We mentioned it late as a matter of course, after the chips and layered dips succumbed to fruit salads and cheesecake balanced carefully on paper plates and laps.

We were both in town from up north visiting the homes of our families set on neighboring hills; two strangers acquainted by proximity to a place we knew as children.

It was this simple fact of memory that might have been lost in the casualness of our conversation missed in the recounting of subsequent details: places lived, tasks done, philosophies formed, details listed as means of introduction interesting in the usual way, and peripheral to the central point.

Fire defines the nature of a face.

It was there without saying: the magnitude of blaze the escape to refuge the endless blanket of ash the bright, green shoots

the marvelous uncertainty written in awful, furious gold;

understood differently as a child grows old and looks out to see the view,

taking in the features of a place grown familiar: red-tiled roofs, sweet pine, silver olives, vibrant, wild oak,

the wondrous certainty it rolls eternal

through these hills and canyons toward that shining sea.

The Poetry Wall for E.L.

Build it tall, wide, perpendicular to the sky so clouds can slide and settle at its bottom. Build it narrow and long, a story with a purpose, a no-end song. Keep away from bends - corners or curves. The aesthetic is best if plain - a strong, open surface.

Arriving in flocks to preen and court and nest, then molt and bolt into a different form,

> Her words will do the rest, arranging and re-arranging the order of your home.

Whatever storm brings Her to you, you will know. Omens are superfluous -Her weeping laughter, Her soft knocking, is your heart. She will burst into a thousand moths drawn to the light in your skin, the sight of a magnificent wall.

Beholding Her, you will understand why all poets are drunk, dizzy fools, lucky if they find their way home. She'll leave you speechless half the time, and the other half, babbling, as if life depended on words alone.

And it might. It's hard to tell. So hell, why not? The world is full of function.

Build a wall for Poetry Her milk white teeth, Her sage perfume, Her small-moon-shining-shell-perception Her trumpet-throated-flower-bird-perfection, where imagination's curling vines can twine on wine-soaked libations of wonder, a standing invitation for Her.

## Watt? Watt what you say?

what do you spend your time on, and why when the snowball you kick up knocks you in the ass? why do you spend your time why, on what?

how beautiful the snow and bare bare the earth barely melting and rain comes how beautiful down

what does it mean to be good, to be good at something? what is that "at" doing in your sentence? what does it mean to be good? to be good to be good to be be good to something i write words lightly and erase them. i write words you can't even taste them. before they come out they're already gone, before they're sung out they're song. i write the words that come after the good ones are gone.

to be good

i can't wait to be good i can't wait to be good enough for

> light bulbs

do you know

how many it takes w-a-t-t to change? do you know the moon is a beacon to turtles? do you know when water is lit they come flocking? pecking through eggshells they flock to the sea. *dar la luz* is the name they call it down south when the women give birth to children they say *dar la luz*, *dar la luz*,

and she brings in the light to the people who dance around the new babies because they are kissed by the moon on the forehead and the light goes

on, i catch with two hands i catch it and frame it in pixels on screens with windows inside

i conjure up words oh won't you read them? light of the moon reflecting the sun

does the moon have a light that shines from inside? does it look like a lightbulb high up in a streetlight?

i ask, though I shouldn't (isn't it bad?) but i do how does the moon look when the sun isn't on?

maybe the moon moonlighting with moonshine

moons the moonwalk jumps over the cow

moonstruck by madcow wanders like turtles

over the sand erasing the trails