

## Skagit

### I

The wet earth  
Littered with pine droppings,  
Green needles dying yellow  
In the rootdappled mud,  
While limpid and lakish  
Drops hang, suspended,  
Teasing, falling  
From forked boughs –  
Through the air,  
Through the bracken,  
And down into  
The wet earth,  
The underground woodlines,  
Like train schedules of comings,  
Goings...

Desolately,  
The gray buffalo clouds,  
Through the canopy,  
Stampeding,  
Lazily by,  
Into the beards  
Of fog  
Haloing  
Dark peaks.

Out here, days  
Go by. Out here  
Fire's kind, from a cabin:  
Burnt brush smoke.

### II

Gray, it  
Courses at all sides,  
Laboring down from  
The mountains.

And laboring down from  
The banks, we  
Move surefooted –  
Still, tentative.  
The rocks adjusting  
Under our weight,  
Tumbling algaebacked,  
Loosing mud –  
A sparse clacking,  
Buried in the lull.

The frothrills  
Roll and swirl dirtily  
Under the slag of  
Sky: cold, and blindly  
Rushing...  
To brighter climes,  
Less ashen, not so  
Desolate.

Wading out ahead –  
My travelling partner –  
His khaki pants darkened,  
His white T-shirt stuck and  
Lucid against his back,  
Turning round to speak,  
In a human language,  
Smiling...

The melted snow  
And sediment, at all sides –  
The pines slumbering  
Darkly off the flume –  
The campsite: miles behind,  
Still casting its acrid smoke.

The round stones  
Piled at riversedge,  
Become wet, dappled –  
An admonition: Find shelter...  
Make a fire...wait it out.