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Feet

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FEET

for all the others

Where I lived they painted footprints
on the sidewalks. Where people had been hit
jaywalking, a line of white shoes
would take a few steps and suddenly
stagger into the street and stop
at the single white X.

Where does everyone go when they leave
and forget to say a conventional goodbye?
It doesn't take a genius to know
you bury a big dressed-up piece of meat
and later on you can look and see
dirty clothes and a few bones.

This was the lesson for all of us
to be careful and follow the rules.
I never wanted my name signed
with footprints and an X.
Now, these new ones show up.
They walk around all night
looking for people they left behind.

Last spring, on a picnic supposed to
renew what had gotten old and hateful,
we saw a single print, a big one,
in the center of a pasture.
It was as if someone had taken a giant
one-legged hop and landed once in the middle.
Then we realized it was one of those soft spots
in the earth where people go when they are tired
and don't like each other anymore.