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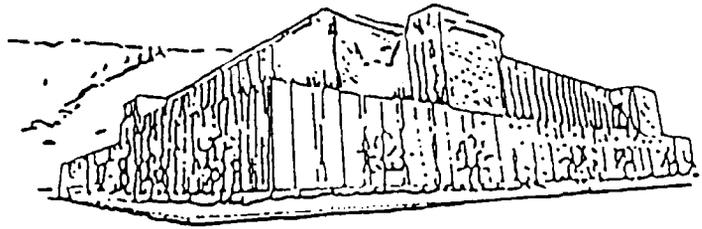
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# Lectures on Vanishing

by

Emily Bedard

B.A. Gonzaga University, 1993

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Montana

1998

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Board of Examiners

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, Graduate School

5-4-98

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## CONTENTS

The Relief of Anatomy	1
The Length of Teeth	3
Solvent	5
Borders	7
Letter South	9
The Unknown Josephs	10
What More	12
Romeo Carrot, a Swedish Postcard	14
Nuptial	17
Registering Mass Only When at Rest	19
Quarter-round	21
Still Life with Bleeding Statue <i>or Puer, Puella. Repeat</i>	23
Pyre	25
Lineage	27
Cathedral View	28
Fire in Emigration Canyon, Utah	30
Incisor	32
In Case of a Surface	35
Recovery Dinner	38
Foothill	40
Glaziery	42
Fugue	43
Watusi	44

## THE RELIEF OF ANATOMY

### I.

Our navymen came to pieces in the heat  
of that new weather. They wore dresses  
to church, took baskets of eggs about  
on their inky arms, to give to spring to break.  
Fingering neckline and ear, they navigated  
the narrow blocks, ankling along canals.  
One carried a white rope from paling  
to paling and raveled the empty city together.

What boys did then was never the same  
as what you did, you, our brother,  
who followed the sailors in the summer  
gowns blowing back through their legs.  
A ripple of crepe. They tested each other  
at the elbow, a gloved question-and-answer.  
Always, a corner turned between you  
and the tap of their glittery shoes.  
Where they met, you found windows:  
a dizziness of handbags and wiry clutches.  
Later, a smash of glass. The sighs, tiny.

### II.

Boiling the chicken whole,  
you placed the world back on course.

*(no stanza break)*

Skin shredded off in pieces, like the dress  
of a woman, slipping off in the steam.  
Tendons loosen. A leg floats to the surface.

For you, a bird is pieces. Bird  
bones were bricks. With our father,  
a vendor of tools, you attacked  
the collapse, a pan of wings.  
In a dim garage, the two of you  
chart flight with tongs, pincers,  
wire, and clasp. Between you  
the bird-frame emerges: reaching  
through ribs, your hands circle the spine.

## THE LENGTH OF TEETH

My father dreads dawn  
and challenges hippos  
with Jonathans, Golden Delicious,  
tossed until one hits the old bull,  
hard, in the balls,  
hefts his legs off  
the cement into the dim  
damp of hippo pen air  
where they stay like suspended  
trunks of Russian olive trees,  
to end summer.

In Berlin my father watched  
zookeepers feed hippos  
whole pumpkins like the basketballs  
he once threw into scooped pink nets,  
pegged in place by long grey teeth.  
And here on the plains,  
he remembers magpies from the west,  
waits for them on these streets.  
But he loves best birds of prey,  
with the calm and sudden cruelty  
he lacks. Still he hurries  
when my mother who has spadepinned  
a snake hollers someone bring the axe.

*(stanza break)*

Yes, men age quickly,  
my father and the zookeepers,  
to the tick and turn  
of silver clocks slow balanced  
on pink hippo tongues,  
caught in the clean throats of hawks.

The men and hippos grow  
their whiskers long,  
their eyes narrow  
to an avocado color,  
like olives from the tree  
my father fights with its hoar  
and coughing outside the window  
on nights when curtains hang  
like crimped pie crusts  
to contain the dark.

As the youngest ones,  
we, his daughters,  
feed the dog.

Our teeth are small.  
Late at night we walk  
in silence past pieces  
of garden snake still  
twitching in garbage cans.

The wind reaches  
for our wrists and heels.  
We pull our hair across  
our faces into beards.

## SOLVENT

I approach the lakeside table  
 as if by telescope. Their mouths  
 are huge detail. A swell and a pop  
 between their teeth, triangular bubbles.  
 Disguised as the maitre d', I bear dessert,  
 insisting. They twist the table linen  
 into a kiss. My false moustache slips  
 in the heat. A bone on a plate  
 grows brown from exposure.

In Greece young men prepare to soak  
 their drowsy surrogate fathers.

A crease of purple corners her mouth.  
 His chin is slick with fat.

Knowing the silver curve  
 of his lover's cousin's mouth,  
 the Veronese awakes in his bath.

He works his mouth around a leg joint,  
 she gnaws the red knuckle of a beet.

Judith's dark grinding;  
 Holofernes' dreams of milk.

*(stanza break)*

If the appetite of infidelity—  
but it is night and I am here, in love  
with a man whose eyelids,  
two downturned cyclamen, gesture.  
In steam, the balcony splinters.  
I spit on my hands. I, the women,  
all of us, the men, we carve  
our way with fluids.

**BORDERS**

In August he watches the shearing  
of catalpa trees. She breathes in marigolds.  
Their tap water has begun to taste  
of grapefruit. He sees her sideways,  
noticing, the first time, that yellow doors  
lead right through her. How  
openings happen is not known  
and why try to know, she offers,  
when the magazines proclaim:  
henna, fringe, necklines.

By fall they feel a nagging at the base  
of the throat, the presage of mild pestilence,  
attacks on the real body, a cough..  
He swallows handfuls of zinc at breakfast,  
describing how the rabid grandfathers  
of their native neighbors—*viva la Nuova!*—  
tore down the statues of Boethius  
in the war. *Do you see*, he asks,  
the stooping curator, a marble arm  
in his arms, a *B* in relief on a silver plate.  
She sees instead the scraping fingertips,  
the missing daughter's face unnoticed,  
floating there and wet from the fountain.

(stanza break)

*In all things the creatures of your head  
come to the pillow before you do, he says.*  
The adopted language hangs on his teeth  
like soil. She rummages the closet  
each night before sleep. *It's not like  
solitaire, she tells him, it's not like  
watching fire when the rage of consumption  
rushes in, hot and hard as a shell.*  
The ocean becomes brass to you and you fear  
your coppery skin turning green.

**LETTER SOUTH**

Dear Margaret: He married her. Six days ago  
to be precise. Enclosed please find photos  
of silverware. I tried to glue them on—  
they wouldn't leave the food alone. I am  
alone. They say there's lots to go around,  
they say that and we go around, at least.  
Did you see her, anyway, his Dawn? I still  
bruise easily myself. By evening,  
or even five, a woman rolled across  
a plate of plums! My new lover's a sonneteer.  
From France. We have our own traditions, like,  
well, once a year we dress as characters  
from TV shows, the ancient ones. Parents,  
children, neighbors, oh, *anyone*, can watch  
us fall, by happy accident, in love.  
My handkerchief, his hat. The long way round  
the parking lot to graze an arm. A lounge  
for late, late shows and always separate beds.  
Even a wedding episode. I swath  
myself from head to toe in pink. The train  
approaches, singing bells. It brakes to a stop  
in steam. The groom (like him, close up) hops on.  
He shapes a sign like, "stay," then hollers out.  
When rails tip, an engine enters sky.  
The crowd boils up to see my stocking seams.

## TO THE JOSEPHS

Why not be welcome in Austria, Peru, Vietnam  
 when this is Joseph, protector of homes?  
 For the sale of a new hovel, he burrows deep  
 in the lawn, invisibly luring the buyer  
 to impotence. Joseph, himself, recalls  
 a burgeoning wife, the dangers of a cross-cut saw.

A path needs paving. So this is Canada. Lucky him,  
 to be amongst the fathers, to guarantee a happy death—  
 Perhaps Joseph will pose for painters, will pose  
 with crutches or drag a white donkey to its rest.

If America modernized, that is,  
 when it did, a tiny man hollered back at tides  
 of red. The chattering bishops cut their veins  
 to prove them blue. Joseph huddled  
 on a rear shelf, his ear held to a screen,  
 scratchy with doubtful voices muttering:

the guilty, too, need graves. A priest  
 disguises the prison bed. He holds  
 a string of beads to the window  
 but Turin is dark except at night.  
 Pallbearers stumble in the footlights.  
 All the guards of the cemetery,

*(no stanza break)*

all the miners of tin, follow Joseph  
from burial to burial, staring  
at a hawthorn staff, at flowers in snow.

A man may end who does not make shoes,  
whose books are tiny tables for dust.

The carpet is made of clothes. A common boy  
and another common boy appear  
in the kitchen and do this all day: Shuffle.

Then: Stop. They sing a carol, beckoning.

We ask each other what they say,  
what we ourselves should say. It is:

Joseph: farewell. Strands of him, mixed in  
with glass and mercury, spill up the wall.

**WHAT MORE**

A boy like the mother of another boy  
stops up the ears of the city. A boy  
alone in a cornfield cries—

he doesn't know how it came there,  
why he has to stay a boy  
in corn, alone for hours. A boy

will be a boy or boys, if he knows  
his hemisphere, the time,  
the dip and vault of barometers.

A boy I knew looked like that once.  
He didn't stay a boy for long—  
instead he found: a boy must work,

be stern and always steal second  
by second by second from catalogs  
and magazines, must never overeat

his life with humid pirouettes.

A boy will move like water  
if you let him around and over,

let him break himself on you.

A boy, an otter, the moon, a net—

*(no stanza break)*

what more? The handsome lords

are leaping up to capture golden rings.

Perhaps a boy will follow them.

His frothy horse first chooses up then down—

the saddle satisfies him less

and less, the boy-him *and* the horse.

A boy would like to carry weight,

the bodies of real men, and be a horse.

The horse, he wants to stop

a while to be a boy.

## ROMEO CARROT, A SWEDISH POSTCARD

Now I know what they want,  
 swarming boats to Sweden:  
 A Romeo Carrot.  
 His green hair tufts, his legs taper  
 to feet like blunted pencil tips.  
 Who needs a neck, in Sweden,  
 where we bundle them?  
 A purple scarf will do to entrance  
 the dairymaid. He sturdies her  
 around the garden. *We* devoured  
 Greek to learn this inevitable orange.  
 O Romeo Carrot! We longed all night

for your kneeling appearance at bedside,  
 all tiptoed from the kitchen. You eluded—  
 and we grew round on other pictures:  
 the pink nursery girl sugars  
 her teacup, a butler at her shoulder  
 his face for all the world  
 like a stern and boiled beef.

Can it be that all Swedish postcards  
 are so sexy, so cruel?

Dear Romeo, August arrived  
 at last. We turned up the boxgarden today.

*(no stanza break)*

Your cousins, wan vermillion, hit bottom  
 and crooked left. Pale inedible “L”s.  
 Left: that’s where the sea moves. They bend there  
 to escape a history of escorts, of Romeo Carrot,  
 who rounds the garden,  
 a milkfed blonde on his arm.  
 We hear them whispering:  
 Out with eyelet and braids!  
 They kick over baskets and stamp  
 the poison frog-eyed berries.  
 They hope the ships are hiring.

We American girls, broad-toothed,  
 freckly, fail at milking Swedish cows.  
 Young rootlings everywhere embarrass  
 at our proteinaceous hands. Back at home,  
 we chew as we speak. Our carrots  
 lean around us to listen for the snap  
 of foreign flags. What do they see  
 when they look (they are just looking)  
 at the fish-booth girls, elbowing,  
 in their yellow shirts? They will vanish  
 one dawn, the yearning carrots

as fish girls run nude down the beach,  
 making rocks of their hands to throw them.  
 A flutter of yellow sleeves waves  
 from deck—they saw their arms at us

*(no stanza break)*

as if to friends they plan to plant,  
as if to spring Clutching a cable,  
one another, they expose raw roots.  
We roughen against the salt air  
and help the shivers to last.

## NUPTIAL

A cake sits among the afterthoughts, a dip  
of frosting reads: “To Jane & Eric—At Least.”  
A man slides past between you and yours,  
past mine and me (in profile by the door)  
and skims gifts into pockets of his black gown.  
My uncle, the dentist, standing in as priest.

I eat two lilies to flavor my breath—  
stamen, stamen, petals. Corolla. Calyx.  
(Calixes? How *do* you form the plural?)  
My upper teeth dust my lower teeth  
with pollen. A yellow paste. Turmeric’s  
for forgiveness, but photographs blue.

The mate of these is green, as green as you.  
Your moustache, two brown succulents,  
grows fuller in proof of prom nights  
when the best man here raises a glass to the mic:  
He knew you when you never knew them  
or her, any, Amy, Annie, dozens!

By the painted horse, the singles  
debate the marinade, pick at eggplant,  
watch the walls. A toddler strangles  
the shadow of a toddler. A grandfather rumples;  
his wife glides a tango with an aunt.

*(no stanza break)*

An eye to you, my father stretches his necktie

to the ceiling—a joke he's tried before.

We navigate forks and waterpics.

Glass grapes are everywhere.

Hours more, the screen is grainy

with moving linen. A silver car reverses

over the threshold. The door, its lockets, clicks.

In the arbor, a dog's tooth catches a woman's dress.

He hears a rip, she's turning white,

and there are we: La-la-la. La. Loveless.

**REGISTERING MASS ONLY WHEN AT REST**

In this book I'm reading  
the woman talks about tourists  
to say, "I do not love you"  
to the man. I handle your bucket  
of chestnuts, their gloss gleaming  
around a center soft to the tooth,  
your declaration, good through April.

I've been meaning to ask  
for your new address.  
Have you crowned your Jewel,  
her skin white under stains of wine?  
Do you remember our trick  
of boiled water on the purple spots,  
the evaporation, an illusion  
of unblemish? The steam?

Well, this new love of mine  
is a bloody mess, handgun laws  
in the bedroom notwithstanding.  
The traffic. The riots.  
Sometime last October, we pressed  
our fingertips together  
until their webs fused,  
netting me for a season.  
On the front page today,

*(no stanza break)*

hunters say an animal will not bite  
itself where it feels pain.

The wind blows right through this house.  
You must smell it. A decade ago  
we learned that no two electrons  
share their quantum numbers,  
that in motion, they weigh nothing at all.  
I am living in the mountains  
with a man whose eyelids—  
I swear to you I am in love.

He plans to inseminate the world  
with shavings from his chin,  
swooshed out through the sewer  
in an alabaster froth of toothpaste.  
It's a pity you and I did not meet  
this way, standing still  
over trays of salmon roe.  
He drew a line in water;  
I moved organs from eggs  
with your form in tow.

**QUARTER-ROUND**

Sunday:

We finish, then set about  
packing together our knees,  
an ankle, then a hip, in turn.  
I consider the sheet. You ask  
for your arm back. You buy  
sheer underthings, and all week long  
I keep you in between ribs and wool.  
While I am still waking, you root  
beneath the wraps, over me,  
a Spaniard exploring a gold terrain.

Tuesday:

He is hours away again,  
where the ladder slips beneath him.  
I have said to be careful,  
as far along as he is.  
Six months. In the dream  
he returns, baring his belly  
at me with a smack. My turn,  
I say, thundering the hammer.

Wednesday:

Before there were shoes  
we walked miles,  
our feet in fish.

*(stanza break)*

*Now I call you Jackson,  
and I call you Jack. I call  
you Thomas Jonathan Stonewall  
and you never call back.*

Friday:

My young sister believes in a lover,  
arriving on da Vinci's flying machine.  
She sees him above her,  
lofted by the lightest Italian breezes.  
From where she watches,  
his head revolves, his wings like paper leaves,  
his body is a narrow bending wire.  
She will compromise with a salmon-  
colored altar boy, alerting tropic zones.  
She eases herself under.

Saturday:

My mother never bought  
a pastry cutter because (she said)  
she had ten on the ends  
of her arms. It's her children's lot  
to inherit their father's hands,  
large on the steering wheel, but  
strengthless in bed.

**STILL LIFE WITH BLEEDING STATUE***or***PUER, PUELLA. REPEAT**

A boy brings a girl a trick:  
upright on his bicycle  
he tips to the left,  
hands holding fast to rubber grips  
and falls straight onto grass.  
She asks for another fall to see  
the gift of his discipline,  
the snip of puppetstrings—  
all propping parts of him dewired  
to commit his hands to a single bar.  
His feet press patterned metal.  
He stares at her, at her collarbone,  
his new skin-covered horizon,  
even as the old ground is rushing up.

For her gift to him, she cracks her kneecap,  
a little white star, turning tourist  
of her skin in purple. A starfish in red.  
He points to his own bruises, offers  
to help with a spin of his hands, old cuts—  
but she, who has seen her bone, walks away,  
bleeding into her sock, to the carousel:  
a blur of horses showing their gums.

The tidal moods weathermen promised him

*(no stanza break)*

refuse. Even at night, left alone, no shores  
will shift—afloat he finds rocks below that spell:  
*how people see you is not how you see her,*  
*this she, this sister-girl with burning hair*  
*and magical bending bones.* Beached,  
he wanders the fruitstand (what luck  
to find walls, a roof) picking pears  
and leaving them among the hairy backs of kiwi.  
The scale swings with his berries and apples.  
He piles them in, but a woman points at fruit,  
at the money-drawer, the boy, a list of numbers.  
Same time and place, she says, impossible.

**PYRE**

A Sunday, the afternoon: my father,  
his hands white against steel bars,  
stands before the cage of orangutans.  
We daughters have brought him here  
from the snakehouse, fresh and damp.  
He relaxes, facing fur and expression

and reminds us how that winter of '79  
the sun eased over the edge of Africa  
like a tangerine dipped in honey.  
The evening light obscured a figure  
on the road, tiny and dazzled. My father  
recalls its tattering skin-filled dress,  
like a glimpse of himself  
in a storefront. Himself as a girl.

We imagine how his military car,  
impatient for a scent, nosed in  
too hard, a dog at a baby.  
How his feet and his hands branched on  
through the plastic minutes, then—  
an orange child grinned at him,  
the driver, and shed its burning color.  
The feathered limbs, the four wings  
trailing, aflame, floated past.

*(stanza break)*

We hear the rest again for him:  
how the scream of orangutans swarmed  
the car and how what were sunspots  
sprouted hands. Their tongues  
spun whorls of red. They beat  
orange hands on glass. He asked himself  
*Do they understand mirrors, doors?*

We turn to llamas, the long heads,  
the legs, the pricking ears to stop  
my father from hearing primates—  
He thinks he can bend at bars and lead  
a trail of monkeys out a black gate.  
Behind him they will bear a small body,  
ribbed in light, on fire, toward the hills  
of his home. The piper, he leads,  
leaving us to the stomp of elephants.  
A crowd of shadows, one shoulders above,  
dance the carmagnole, hold matches  
to grass and toss down eggs from trees.

**LINEAGE**

After, a man took a car that wasn't his,  
though the key was his, or a friend's key.  
My father, stranded on asphalt.

My mother, at the center of circles,  
never meant to give birth to me,  
amid the brilliant spills and accidents  
of a globe. Even so, for her, I call it lovely—  
how the reamers spin to separate,  
how the fishes' middles slip from their sides.

Now that it's May, you and I swell out,  
between us a pale hillock.  
Put your hand inside me—  
can you tell the organs from the ideas?

## CATHEDRAL VIEW

The cathedral hunches on its little hill,  
a striped hulk balanced on a bucket.  
These walkers walked such steps, perspired  
in trains to arrive! A stripe of white,  
of black, the bricks of marble stack up and end  
in clouds. A campanile like a broken finger  
lunges at the entryway. In the hot courtyard,  
a yellow wind. Everyone who knows  
this place is resting, so what is that rattle  
from the dark arch? Did the masons  
stumble the cobbled street with fever?  
They finished this in their sleep. Their sleep  
caved in on them when they rolled open mouths  
to the ceiling. A sickness baked in the tiles  
by day. A red roof leaked on the city.

The cathedral tiles soak through the shoes  
of any one of us, alone with sepulchres.  
The heads of popes above turn chins away  
from the warm below. Their brows  
accuse the sculptor who thought a dome  
of knobs and hollows could be a man.  
If you are mobile and can read the sign,  
do not step on the pink mosaic of skulls.

*(stanza break)*

There is the altar, here are the tombs.  
Behind the baptismal font, the shoulders  
of a chapel crack open. The walkers blink  
at windows flashing, at pages under glass.  
They push a little paper into a box.  
They look to the tossing letters—  
but there is the rattling arch again  
and the hand slants down the page in twists  
and lines, in pointed waves. The letters coil  
and split their backs. The flicks of ink  
turn here, then over. Even with a finger  
on the slippery surface, tracing, tracking,  
they can only read the yellow-blue initials—  
a vine-twined A, an eel of an O.

**FIRE IN EMIGRATION CANYON, UTAH**

By the first siren a great carpet  
Of long-armed spiders spilled  
From the mouth of the canyon.  
They swarmed in a jetty blanket

Away from the flames  
And covered the smoking road  
In broken threads and knots,  
A furry tongue

For a canyon  
That spit them  
With smeary black bites of pine  
To hit the sky spelling:

Enough of spiders and greenery—  
This choking sweet decay,  
Rebirth like a toothy grip,  
And their call of: Saplings! Saplings!

The spiders read the fear  
As winter. Their stiffened legs  
Reach out of black button bodies  
Like machinery left running and rusting.

This attitude of old women at busstops

*(no stanza break)*

These cradled bundles, make fingers  
From crooks of wire. They hide  
Warm bodies in their own—

It's flies and children too.  
This flood  
Of legs and eyes and shells  
Flees fire. If we desire,

The Egyptian soldiers appear,  
The Russian peasants, any running thing,  
Like joking lice from the farmer's dead  
daughter's mouth only after the stranger

Traveling—alone, always alone in darkness—  
Slept with her. His curiosity  
Became the invading wakefulness  
Of one-eyed spiders.

The swelling bites too small to see,  
the spiders crawl each other  
to keep their body tunnels  
free from a wave of sound.

They have left the hungry  
And the drowning and a flame presses  
At their backs until they pop—  
An arabesque of legs, a little heat.

## INCISOR

His gilded foot poked out from the bed looks  
like a human bait. The hook's

his calloused rough right toe. I consider:  
am I any bigger

than this? To bite his toe or not?  
That other time his sock

flopped halfway off, his heel stuck in the ribs,  
in the fraying top, my grabs

at the toe tore skin. I think he bled.  
But the newswoman said

it's lesser offense to incise than to tear.  
I lost the biter's fear

of lockjaw years ago when I learned  
*irreversible turn*

improves on *pause*. I could clamp the tough  
white-yellow skin, enough

to set the hook, my lip or tongue—I lean  
but the footwatch guillotine

may drop a cold blade. My only head  
would be lost for biting in bed

*(stanza break)*

and then hung in the gallery of lover-thiefs.

These are my common griefs

with all greedy mice, who eye the bright tidbit  
skewered on a bright spit

that gleams, “Eat me! Eat me! Eat!” this peanut butter.  
I’ve seen the convenient flutter

of package promises. Even games I had  
as a child were overglad

to guarantee the plastic mouse without the pain:  
“Mousetrap: Try out your brain

against the mouse!” Oh, teething began my slide  
toward him! On a carnival ride

called Mousetrap at Promise Park, I cornered:  
a body slammed forward

into another body, my mind, remote, aware  
was an orange boxcar.

Now my body cannot stop itself. Moments  
of giddy chill lament—

why ride this ride? A ferris wheel, harmless  
—look! There it is, goes, was—

spins color below me, then the sudden jerk—

*(no stanza break)*

and tiny neckbones work

to keep the head tied on the careening rest  
of the body, dumb, pressed

to a shape, then another, the rising  
rattle. My fingers cling—

they have been uninvolved this whole quick life.  
The streaming golden light

of the carnival shines on his pale foot.  
The crest—I cannot look

as I plunge forward, teeth fatal, white, bared  
to bite, to sink—beware!—

into him. Then, a bony nailed foreign thing,  
bloody and small, is in me, swimming.

## IN CASE OF A SURFACE

### I.

Let  $X$  be a curve or a product  
of curves. Then we two are a curve  
moving over a field, a field  
full of grass-scented schemes.

First we need to define: *then* was a line bundle,  
& *now* is a line; in between, a sheaf of images of sheaves.

The opening move is most generous  
with polynomials naive. Using heat,  
all inclusions stay natural. Please,  
let  $X$  be exceptional.

### II.

We need April to ramify a cover.  
We will follow the old model—  
Also, or other. Any usage,  
if we find it, if it lasts, is final.

### III.

Here we show  
how to reduce without loss:  
Let  $D$  be.

Within curves there exists:

*(no stanza break)*

- a) to vanish or
- b) not to vanish

That is, to be rewritten as a finite sum.

#### IV

We need to be linear  
to disguise. We exercise.

#### V.

Suppose this is not,  
is not what we see.  
Let  $X$  be a zero—  
we are done.  
This step often occurs  
without warning, inside.  
With what's left we express:  
a big sum on the right-hand side.

#### VI.

We end with a surface—  
a simpler case than dimension.  
We must not, in the end, be cohomologic.  
In fact, that's why there must be extra  
on the big right-hand side.

#### VII.

The same method for others  
we adapted easily,

*(no stanza break)*

but reduction always takes longer.

Still some cases, we can venture,  
show a stronger result.

It is ever our hope to return,  
if we are not, to what we wrote,  
to our work, to our field, to the future.

## RECOVERY DINNER

He includes me in a loss of organs:  
 first one, then another. I swelled up  
 like a tuber, then a tomato, his melonheart  
 burst, then again. A long, cold hour.  
 What does he carry toward me? Where are his slippers?  
 All the patches I predicted? Between the fingers  
 of a wife, his arm, an elbow bone—  
 the thumb has its own pulse.  
 Across the soup, he blows on ice water.  
 I am falling in love with a hat.

You've been cut, he noticed,  
 and colored. I found out about shadows,  
 that I had one, even several.  
 We mapped Ireland into a man,  
 the body a whipped suit of words,  
 penumbral, others. Our agreement:  
 subtract forty years, a green house,  
 ischemia, edema—why not.

My love, this is a chair. It is a rigid solid.  
 What separates me from you, warm  
 and pearshaped, hovers centertable. The dish  
 the Spanish boyfriend broke, China  
 from Texas, there's no repairing.  
 We're right to lie. I make my voice  
 a valentine. The saint, both of him,

*(no stanza break)*

dragged reel to reel, when called.

There was blood with buttons in it.  
One stuck for an instant—an instant  
is enough. There were curtains.  
They dropped. Forgetting, I roll  
my eyes. Sightless back, the pin-man sits,  
his broken legs to me. A scrape of chin  
pulls the room closer. Let it last.

To catch a mantis off the freezer door  
among jars, peach-lit in a room  
for jars: to remember. To clog  
it all with hair. Take mine. Have mine.  
His calves jump in his socks.  
A man sees a hand, a head, a color.  
He names seven numbers to describe  
me. When I ladle, I stain him twice.  
The soup spreads as easy as eggplant,  
pendular, with a tiny hat. He needs  
a bowl. His arms, benign, intact.

## FOOTHILL

Eyes black as their bodies, the wasps built  
 a nest on our window—a paper home.  
 June water made the crenellated circles wilt:  
 the wetting down of a natural brain.  
 In August we bought couch after couch and tried  
 out the way we sat. Next to that mountain

days were dark. The gray dome  
 of another nest in the lilacs caved: early October.  
 The grass grew brown from green.  
 Squirrels tossed their questioning bodies over  
 leafy spaces to be between  
 safety and safety. “Like us,” I lied—

you and I had confused the chase since the day  
 we saw a neighbor’s chicken ricochet  
 from slot to slot of the fence where it was kept.  
 For us, that bird lived its life in lines.  
 It disappeared after one midmorning show  
 of its black right eye. We feared the slow

fed bodies of boxers next door who slept  
 in nests of feathers vines.  
 The male wore his tether like a rose-raw wound;  
 the bitch paced the alley, the steps, and our sleep.  
 One night we heard a rooster scream  
 a baffling name. In the morning I found

*(stanza break)*

you'd crawled into the piano.

A fear had approached you, confidant on the lawn,  
and moved away, like your year at Capistrano,  
the leap to twenty-five, your water dream,  
all had touched you once and gone on  
living somewhere else. I tried to argue

that the animals watched to embarrass,  
to catch us naked and tossing our clothes  
over separate shallows in the mattress. But you  
said it was only glass between and aqueous  
illusions of speech. You untangled and rose  
to lead me out, to show me clumsy cruel tracks

that I argued were foxes' or boxers balanced  
on each other's feet. The bushes thrashed and bent  
I said were only early All Souls who'd flung  
against our door and danced.

You were shivering. You said: see the hundred blacks  
of its gaze, its wirey coat and tail in their ascent

up the arbor vitae from where it had hung.

From above it had torn apart the pairs with its claws:  
deck chairs, axe and maul, muddy shoe from muddy shoe,  
the mailbox carriage from the mailbox horse, a swollen tic  
from a panting dog, and then, with yellow vaporous jaws  
had quietly torn us brick from brick.

## GLAZIERY

My face crowds a mirror in a wooden cat's mouth,  
a clear Chilean cat-mouth, a Christmas mirror.

Beaming beyond teeth, past a cat-face burnt  
and red, I see the spot to get behind: Isn't that

my head? The stunt charms him, the man, or the frame  
of him—he weighs enough, he shows his eyes are whole,

a volume discreet, the body crocheted. See his hot-air holes  
and arresting knots. His contour, green and breathing

as when I sent him on out. I said Get over  
yourself, I said, this couch, this October wait on a beard.

Air out! Grow up! My mirror-me, my silver-salt face  
air reduced to metal, the lips upsnarled, told him a thing,

two things: who fed the pants, who hurt at least. My head  
leered loose from its neck, unbound by a frame of mouth.

I watched itself grow round so well he crept each limb  
back in, a contraband of man. That was the bells and I am here

a face in a feline skull ajar, wrested wide off its hinges—  
the thing it tried to bite shoved itself inside. The jaw

will tire. A cat's tongue, who is me, now dries.  
Downtending teeth, their peaks, reach into eyes.

## FUGUE

First itch, then die. Stands to reason:

die, you bear the bending.

Die, itch, stand. Gross and stern,  
the builder erred. Then what?

Nursed 'em, gave 'em room.

Was sure to knock. We want  
a watch to work, at least.

That mirror, that's hers, so what?

Why itch? Die well. So sell  
my necklace, words, mirrors, all.

A priest unditches yours for them.

A stoning (hers) and, say,  
sage mirror, keener, does itch-die gain?

Is itch to swing in air? To sigh  
too much? Oh, sigh, gilt mirror,  
for the decent Jeremy, the gentle Dennis.

They're all in-work—they take this itch  
and break. Underwiring,  
worn under, grows mute. Only I die mine.

## WATUSI

Huge it is, the unbending law, the hand. And I?  
 I kneel all day. When was the begin of wane?  
 Ach, me! This dome of hairs. An eye, an eye.  
 Above paper pairs of knees, a paper brain.

No matter may, could, always be. This end  
 of sliders by accepts what's next as good. The bread  
 a body is. A perma-tent, a coop impends—  
 even when I oil, watusi, wring my brow, am fed,

swab, swizzle, seize, mow, cozy, pony on up.  
 You, giddy, were walking you. Now learn to fall.  
 We whistle at Ali—a fist at all is a little still. Atop  
 an airy one keeps the key. Material, particle, we stall.