

PART THREE  SONG IN THE GARDEN

**The frost**

The frost has finally retreated  
in the face of April. Tonight  
the moon spreads fine cream  
over our garden. I look out  
of our window at midnight  
and once again I see frost.

**Tulips**

Tulips rise early, the poster children  
of industry. Well-mannered, round-  
shouldered and orderly. How seductive  
their flexible beauties. They tempt us  
outside, into the early spring weathers.  
And then the wind rises and lifts us  
unawares into the plot of the cold day.

**The sea**

Shovel for paddle,  
grass in waves, fish in ponds,  
the seaweed of daisy and thistle,  
the tulips startle and descend,  
the starfish of the risen rose,  
the hollies whales of green,  
the three wheels of my little boat  
as I set out to sea.

## Song in the garden

In the oldest part of our garden  
I plant our newest bush. It will bear black  
and blue berries in two years, maybe three,  
delicious berries, though the first growth  
will be bitter as a letter of farewell.  
It has been many years.  
I can still taste those words in my mouth.

## His arrival

The nasturtium nudges the buttonbush.  
An oriole lifts from the homemade feeder  
sounding his orange alarm. One hummingbird  
clears her ruby throat. Another buzzes. The roses  
right themselves. The slender grasses.

It is another morning, they remind each  
other. And now, look — he is standing  
on the patio wearing his oldest shoes.  
The mug of cold coffee, the morning paper.  
He sets them down. Oh!, he is coming to see us.

## Roses

The bush resists my efforts  
to strip its glories. *“These  
are my finest flowers, they come  
with a price.”* A thorn finds  
some skin just past the top  
of my garden glove. It bites,  
I leak. One thick pearl.  
I wipe away the red with  
a leaf, and drop the smear  
on the dark mulch. You  
cannot escape the truth. You,  
too, are a part of this earth.

## Saturday morning's roses

They are the lazy prom queens  
of the garden, yawning, unkempt,  
entirely beautiful. Look, their mouths  
are beginning to open, they are bored,  
they are beyond it, whispering to  
each other, and their green livery  
has fallen and lies at the foot of the bed.

## Camarilla

The dried grasses are waking  
into the springtime now, their  
dreadful hair clicks the morning  
open, and they are whispering  
to each other beneath the breeze  
like common schoolgirls, hair  
like straw, no color to speak of,  
the girls who are never noticed,  
the girls who make up their own clique.

### The girls who are never noticed

There is a charm to their dirty glasses.  
There is a charm to the small stinks  
that are beginning to pour from  
their bodies. There is a charm  
to their troubled skins, their greasy hair,  
their unwashed knees, the way,  
at gym, they keep to themselves,  
deposing the prom queens in their minds,  
calculating the easiest ways to die.

## Schoolgirls

It is 2:40 a.m. and the garden  
quiet, the rooms quiet, a dull hum  
from the kitchen, water drains  
like a snake through the belly  
of the house, heat grieves the ducts,  
the systems phase in, phase out, at  
times, and, at times, no sound at all,  
nothing but the clock on the wall  
set in its scalloped casing, telling  
the paintings, the books, the furniture,  
telling me at roughly the same pace  
that my heart is beating that each  
second has fallen off a cliff, has gone  
off into space, or time, like a soldier  
going over a hill. I listen to each one  
shedding its radiant physics, that  
bright spray of seconds, and what is  
there then but to think of a schoolgirl  
on a beach? a girl shaking droplets  
like glitter out of the dense long hair  
that, she imagines, will last forever.

## Come to me, says the earth

and the acorn listens.  
The sparrow listens. The fallen  
senator. The leather sole.

Come to me, says the sun,  
and Earth listens. Jupiter.  
Mars, in its war paints. Saturn.

When will I learn such gravity?

The continents long for each other  
at two centimeters per year.  
Two. Toenail speed.

Mountains rise more slowly still,  
parsing time in millimeters: the rim  
of a penny; nine sheets of paper.

When will I learn such patience?

## Spinoza & the universe

She loved him because of the logo,  
the little brand of beauty, he insisted  
on stamping upon each notion.  
And so she came to ask him  
if the mathematics of the flower  
might mirror the mathematics  
of the universe. Numbers are  
numbers, he said. They live to echo.  
They exist to be loved. But they will  
never love you in return. The flower  
is to be loved, he said. But it will never  
know your name. It wears its cape  
of bees lightly, like a shower of stars  
on the summer's horizon. And each  
bee, each star, each number has its  
name. Two names, in fact. Like you.  
Each has the name it was given. And  
each has the name that it has given  
itself, that peculiar honey, that  
taste in the mouth in the morning.

## But what of the flower?

### *i. Flower as universe*

It is private as your secret pillow,  
little bird. Private as a nest.

The flower is a universe, really,  
in lower case, with petals. *The*  
universe. Really. And we exist  
within it, love. Take this worm  
in your mouth. Take it. What  
can you take from the flower?

### *ii. Universe as flower*

Of you it asks nothing. Does not  
demand your servitude, decrees  
no evils in its name, does what  
it can to prettify the world  
in whatever time it has. It floods  
nothing. Turns nothing to salt.  
But water and fire in every petal.

### *iii. Universe as universe*

Do what you will with its name.  
Go covet. Go love other birds.  
Take other flowers before it.  
It will not blacken like a storm,  
will not appear to you in robes.  
No need for you to stand – it  
does not recognize a sandal.

### *iv. Flower as flower*

A flower flowers, simply.  
It is no different than a star:  
it lives within numbers, its own,  
born whole with every memory  
that it will ever have. The flower  
is nothing like you. Born to its  
own bland force, it hums, it dies  
where it was born. It forces nothing.

## Flower

It asks nothing, forces nothing.  
This is the truth of the garden.  
If you were to fall before it, wailing,  
world-weary, a supplicant, if you  
were to pour out your hungers,  
it would take more interest  
in the bee vibrating beside you.  
The bee that does not see you  
the way you see yourself. The bee  
that sees you only for what you  
are. One part of the garden.

## Angels

The leaves are angels,  
messengers. They have come  
in batches, in robes of scent  
and hue, great sums of angels.  
Like bells making a silence.  
Autumn on each tongue.

## Trees fringing the garden

The more gnarled the most beautiful.  
Their lines are convoluted as lives.

If they had voices, their verbs  
would be slow, their nouns deep.  
Still, they speak among themselves,  
root to root, sugar talk.

They are proper and posh,  
immune to the seasons,  
bark and leaf are worn  
as a proud corona.

They look down upon  
the unruly carpet at their feet  
and tsk into the wind.  
They wish for a floor of needles.

How they, not *pity*;  
exactly, but *savvy*  
the annuals their lot,  
their brevity. How  
they would lecture,  
if they could, the springtime's  
foolish wash of flower,

flowers delighting  
in form and color  
as if some blush might buy  
a few extra weeks  
or beauty stall  
their slide into the dirt.

How they would scold,  
like the leaf mold.

Their lives, ours,  
inching at the speed  
of root, elaborate  
as branches. Twined.  
They breathe out  
what we breathe in.

I don't think they can see us,  
so tenuous our connection  
to this earth, and theirs so deep.

But they remember the ills  
we've done them. No unringing  
that bell. There are no  
untwisted among us.

PART FOUR  WAR

**Making it**

We watched them circle  
our circle for years, and as  
we fell, most of us, to divorce,  
or fell into mutual disgust,  
they soared. They grew  
wings, like angels, drifted  
on a raft of accord: Dear this,  
*chère* that. Saints shooting  
arrows at each other.  
Targeting the heart.

There is a cost  
to sainthood, to survival.

Survivors do  
what must be done:  
they ferry words over  
coffee, drop three suits  
from the deck, dear  
hearts. Adjust ambitions.

When black clouds rise up  
from the songbook,

when black boots  
tar their borders,

they nod, they smile,  
they bend. They shine.

∞

The last thing  
a raft does  
is give up  
its planks  
at the end  
of the journey.

That it might serve humbly  
to shore the new world.

## Blue movies

*Chère petite,*

seven nights I'm living like a nun.

Not easy. No vision on these boulevards  
persists as yours, in such excess,

so if I ape the saxophone,  
the single reed, you'll grasp the hollows  
of each note, what with these pillows  
unemployed, what with you gone all this week  
and slated to be gone yet another love,  
love, I've been a low gas fire. A surfeit  
of poverties. You'll understand then,  
a man's diversions are not always  
of his choosing.

Earlier this evening,  
the streets still protean with fitful light,  
I blundered into a pliable world  
of only two dimensions: not height  
by length, so much, as hardness  
by longing.

Even as one adapts  
to the want of the beloved, the cave  
of one's affections, so sight adapts  
to darkness, its swollen dimensions.  
But such dimensions! Can you guess  
what rippled now across my vision,

this dreamscape  
to which bad French had borne me?

The bodies of men  
loomed huge before me, given shape  
by sound and smoke and a trick  
of blue light falling from a screen.

And there,  
where I'd thought to unbind  
some restorative image of you,  
the cloister and curve of your belly,  
I encountered instead an alien penetration,  
bodies bent to rituals distinctive as our own,  
yet different: popper, knot, ring.



But truly, not so different:  
for always there is the victor, the  
Eternal Destroyer, and always the one  
invaded, the one to whom victory comes  
in a shining collapse of delight.

Hardness by longing,  
did I write? *Harnessed by darkness*,  
I should have said, I might have said  
of the moths about me, their flutters  
of blue, fingers and tongues unharnessed  
in this hardscape where every thing  
is flesh and all flesh glass.  
You can see through anyone  
in the dark, you can eat your way  
through isolations of darkness.

If greedy eyes  
strayed in twilight from the screen  
tonight, grazing perhaps my own,  
did they reckon my reservoirs as  
drained, drained past all desiring?  
Did they dismiss me out of hand?

Am I discounted now  
even if my ticket is not? No matter.  
I chose thirst over hemlock.

Slipped back then  
into the flagging light, light so blue  
it smacked of berry, slipped back  
into the *rue*, well-named, the street  
bitter, a convent for the abandoned,  
and, missing you, tasted my bitters  
backing up no nostrum for a man of sixty  
encountering nothing by street lamp  
so blue as my unblooded self;

and, home at last,  
indite this note with no intent  
beyond its fluttering surface,  
expecting to commend it,  
in the end, not to the post  
but the fire.

Oh little *chou*, my twitter,  
my coo, love's surely something more  
than an urge, this spoil, this itch, this churr.

But who's to say?  
Can you conjure the slough of despond?

Let the moon burn all night  
in its offices white, if the maw of Paris  
were to swallow me whole, what food  
could I feed it but love?

## Faultless

My eyes in the tumult of daylight,  
my fingers in the floes of night  
have learnt each priceless inch of you  
your lax and less-than-bubbled bum,  
the plump incitements of your calves,  
the lavish gulch between your breasts,  
the edgeless, undefined frontiers  
where your pale areolae break to feast,  
in rutted waves, upon themselves,  
the compass of your pores and pits,  
the soft slump of your upper back,  
the plush ring of your gut. And yet,  
by heaven, I think my love as rare  
as any she belied by false compare.

## The two Mrs.

Soccer moms, they are called.  
As if their vans define them.

Their vans are curtains,  
engines of concealment.  
Their vans are stage paint.

I will lie chastely by your side  
while your other lover  
consumes you. A tale  
of North and South.

I will confine the small birds  
of your shoulders. I will  
fire and stiffen your skin.  
I will jail these parts of you.

I will let you tear  
the hard machinery of my arms  
while she works.

I will let your tongue  
collapse upon mine  
as you lose yourself  
in the cave of my mouth,  
of hers, in the swoon  
of soft and hard,

I will kiss away your crisis,  
taste this food not meant  
for my mouth, I will  
swallow this passion  
that I am not creating  
not wholly.

## Of hammered gold and gold enamelling

There was a little light on the sheets  
as befits an aging afternoon. Her head  
was turned from him, featureless, her hair  
was filtered, played out over the pillow  
as if it had had a life of its own,  
but now that life had left it.

She would have been very cross with him  
if he had said any such thing. She would  
have been cross with him for thinking it.

She was there, then, but invisible to him,  
just a suggestion of ubity because  
the sheets had taken a shape that otherwise  
they could not have assumed. That,  
and the hair. That is how he knew  
she was there. Her breath was quiet  
as the breath of a French mistress.  
His heart was quiet, and the world.

Now there was some rain against the roof.  
And his hand was resting by her pillow,  
swallowed in shadow. It struck him then  
that men have stared into the dark offices  
of their hours for all the instance that  
they have lain with the breathless,  
the bodiless. Some must have  
grown sad, thinking of their fathers,  
theirs. It was nearly arithmetical.  
Patterns on the pillows, the walls.  
A regularity against the windows.

He took it all in as it came to him,  
as the pond takes in the mosaics of rain.  
Chirrup and swansong. The young dying  
on the gallows. In joy. She stirred then  
in her long sleep and drifted back into  
a private dark. Where he did not exist  
for her. What transient thoughts had  
their fathers thought? He looked up at  
what was left of the ceiling. From his  
old man's bed. The field of his making.  
Not much light. Was there any question?

## Italy

In a marriage, if you sit still long enough, something will go wrong. It could be you, it could be she. It could be someone who looks at her when you're not looking, and she barely feels it at first, like the wind on a Maui morning, when what you notice is the sunshine, but still, the wind is there. Always. Almost always.

In Italy, if you sit still long enough, someone will bring you a bowl of olives. Which sounds pleasant enough. But the problem is, she might be beautiful, more beautiful even than the olives, the promise an olive makes to the tongue, and life is already complicated. Always.

## What flowers

A man and a woman sit in two chairs, facing each other. What was slender once has grown fat. What was curly and bushy, straight and thin. It is quiet. Sometimes they look into each other's eyes, silent and unrepenting, but most times they look past each other, studying the paint on the bare walls as though the paint were a text. Or a context. If it is a room they are sitting in, the air is still. If a stage, there is no audience, just people drifting here or there, in and out, for a moment. Sometimes someone vaults onto the stage to bestow a kiss on the man or the woman. And fades away. As a scar fades. Never fully. As a place where there was wreckage on a road is marked, sometimes. Flowers.

## The night our divorce began

No one more astonished than we  
when the flashing red and wailing truck  
tucked into the long curve of our driveway  
and pulled up just outside our garage  
next to the basketball hoop.

Six men rushed to the side door  
to ask my silken wife where the fire was.  
But then a voice squawked  
from a box on the suspenders  
of Richard, the lead fireman — it was nothing,  
said the voice, a false alarm.

One hell of a way to spend the evening  
said Richard. But my wife told them  
that she had just baked a plateful of brownies,  
and the six men shuffled into our kitchen  
in their heavy boots and partook of brownie.

One of them was a little too marvelously  
blue-eyed for me to leave alone for too long  
with my wife, but there were six of them  
in there, laughing and joking with her,  
relieved not to be fighting smoke, admiring  
her long legs, and I had grown invisible,  
so I left them all to the flames of flirtation

and went to sit on the side steps  
by myself, listening to the evening  
dropping from the trees, listening  
to the winding silence of our drive,  
the silence of our dissolving lawns  
and the large surprising silence  
of the truck itself, and

farther off, larger still,  
the silence of the ripening skies  
with their rolls of blues  
and mulberry blacks,  
their tiny rounds of fire.

## The apple of happiness

These are our children,  
the children we have left,  
swimming in the glitter  
of our pool.

This is my wife  
with the rinse of the sun  
upon her.

This is good food  
set out in the shade  
of our gazebo.

This is the apple of happiness.

This is a man called Richard.

This is the worm  
in the apple of happiness.

## I cannot say how or why

Because I loved him like no woman should love a man.  
Because gods are made of plaster, and plaster peels.  
Because I loved him anyway.  
Because he pissed all over it.

But not quickly.  
The thick trickle of the familiar.  
The slow stream of neglect  
with the stench of asparagus hanging in the air  
like dead plants rotting in a dead planter  
dangling from the poles of a collapsing gazebo.

So I pissed, too.

This neglect, this contempt this is what I pissed on.

Contempt.

What contempt the sun must feel for the earth,  
though Earth was clearly once its favorite.  
How tiresome its blather of blues, forget darling  
at a distance. How tepid its black winds blowing.

And how the planets must hate one another by now,  
though once upon a time  
they could not stay out of each other's arms,  
would lay like highwaymen or sidewinders  
for each other, poised in the byways,  
the dark lanes of the firmaments. Once.  
Upon. A. Time.

## The ease of the lie

He wanted her to lie then.  
He had figured it out,  
and she didn't know it

yet. She had no idea  
he had an idea.  
How righteous she was,

and how righteousness reads  
in such light. Now the  
grave seismic needles

about her eyes caught  
the register of  
truth. Its absence.

Where have you been  
he asked. Starbuck's  
she answered.

He noticed with pleasure  
how easy it was  
for her.

## My husband

It took him no time to break me down.  
I lied, but he was like the oceans, relentless.  
Waves of sand rubbing at my lies. Then he  
took me to bed. At first he did what he had  
to do, marking off his turf like a cat.  
It hurt, it was bad. It wasn't easy to take  
from such a tender man. He winced  
at my pain, I could tell he winced,  
even with my eyes buried in the pillows  
I could tell, face down, my legs so tight  
beneath me my knees rubbed like cats,  
but there was no denying his entry, his due,  
I knew it, I did, and I opened to him then  
as I had not opened in years, and he took me  
as I had never been taken, ever, pain, anger,  
it was like love in the books whose covers  
you hide when you are reading in public.

## Betrayal

It was as though they had veered off  
the little map they had drawn for themselves.

The road he took was like the one to Vegas,  
brash and impatient against the rolling dark  
of the wastelands, giving way,  
at last, to the huge glow of the city,  
still far off, still just a promise, but the promise of music,  
if music is the right word for the public jingling  
of coins and the ding of the slot machines.  
And another kind of music, more private,  
the slow jazz of the body. So many  
willing to assist.

The road she took was barely a road,  
more like a rutted path, and at the end  
nothing more than the glow of a dashboard,  
the top of her head illuminated.

## Adultery

He was driving home on a fogged night  
not much different from any night.

He trusted the road  
because he knew the road  
from ten thousand knowings.

How was it, then,  
that the turn at the bottom of their hill  
veered suddenly to the right,  
this turn that had always  
bent to the left?

How was it that  
at the top of the hill  
where their house had been  
(since, what seemed to him,  
the beginning of time)  
there was no house?

how could he trust anything after that?



## Question

If your life were a balcony  
would you be standing on it  
or below it? is what she asked me  
and she was playing with her hair  
twirling the strands, twirling,  
and from time to time she would  
reach out and touch my arm  
where the sleeve of the tee  
cut right across my bicep  
and once she pressed my hand  
while she was making a point  
and her voice dropped below  
all of the other voices at that party  
when for a moment she murmured  
something about her husband  
and her long married eyes held  
my long married eyes  
and my life was a balcony  
and I was swinging somewhere  
outside of it from a night tree.

## Simple chat

Her question was about my past.  
I was the world expert on this subject,  
I could paint whatever I wished to  
on that canvas. I swirled my  
bourbon, a sweet rot. The ice  
had softened to translucence,  
slush on top, berg beneath.  
So much under the surface.  
I felt its weight across the bottom,  
and she sensed it, of course,  
filling all the rest of that ample glass.

## First date

There was still  
the pleasure  
of peach  
on my tongue  
with its little dab  
of vanilla cream

as she excused  
herself from  
the table and  
went to the  
ladies' room  
and never  
returned.

## Paradise Island

A sound bird from a tropic tree  
Dropped sweet, expensive melody.  
The music faltered; then it stopped.  
A golden man, a golden key,  
Unmindful of my witnessing

Shimmied to the silent spot.  
There he wound the sound bird up.  
Its notes grew perfect in the air:  
An artifice with shifting gears,  
It moved the local god to tears.

From a grove of blinding trees  
A native girl appeared to me.  
Her waist was supple as a palm.  
From somewhere well beyond her sigh  
The sound bird started in to sing

The sweet illusion led me on,  
A song as perfect as a psalm.  
Its numbers tightened like a ring  
A metaled, musical machine  
To poultice my illusioning.

## You ask me for a poem about love

You ask me for a poem about love  
as if this were the acid test of love,  
the way sweeping a floor in your bare feet  
is the acid test of sweeping.  
The way you ask a pharmacist for a pill,  
and an hour later she hands you a vial.

But you don't want a metaphor,  
You want a poem  
about married love.  
Good, hard and true.

And all I can tell you is, this is  
the hardest kind of poem.  
This is the hardest kind of love.

## Outsider love

You call me, you're lonely tonight.  
But I can't make it out.  
My wife and I are cooking dinner,  
then the couch, a movie. Foot rubs.

So you ask me for a poem about love  
as if this were the acid test of love,  
the way sweeping a floor in your bare feet  
is the acid test of sweeping.  
The way you ask a pharmacist for a pill,  
and an hour later she hands you a vial.

But you don't want a metaphor,  
you want a man.

Or even a woman. And tonight,  
because you're lonely,  
without either, you want  
a poem, perhaps a poem  
about outsider love  
the love that lifts its eyes  
in the shadows of married love.  
The love that plays at the foot  
of the castle, beyond those iron gates.  
Good, hard and true.

And all I can tell you is, this is  
the hardest kind of poem.  
*This* is the hardest kind of love.

## The knowing wife

He sailed out like Odysseus  
catching the high tides of the town.

Odyssey. Although he knew that it was cruel,  
he told himself he had his reasons.  
He told himself what he needed to hear  
in that private tongue that everyone has.  
The one that will not brook translation.  
How quickly one forgets, forgoes  
the clemencies of home forgiving of  
his morning breath, forgiving of his fingernails.

His lust for rock and reef was just too great;  
he wanted to be clapped and smashed, he wanted  
to be drowned. A mouth of blood and salt.

Sirens ran the blackened streets.  
He sat to eat with queens in silver diners.  
Sometimes found a princess in a mall.  
Sometimes found a princess  
through the mail. And she caught on.  
She understood his wreckages.

But pain knows no reciprocals  
she couldn't just sit and wait for him.  
She did the dishes, did the wash,  
saw the kids got off to school.  
Dance on Tuesdays, piano Thursdays.  
Found the time to shop for food.  
Too much to do to sit and wait.  
Though waiting was the single thing  
that she had grown to tolerate.

She knew some few things he did not.  
For one thing, how it all must end.

## Heartbreak

But  
when he speaks of heartbreak,  
which heart, of so many?  
his own, yes, yes,  
yes, yes, yes, but which?

The one in the elevator,  
on the boardwalk,  
at the podium, the one  
that jumps like a bean  
at good news  
in the office, the one  
that anyone can see?

Or the one by the pool  
in the backyard  
that opens to his friends,  
that warms his children,  
worries his wife?

The one  
that never tires  
of pillow talk? That one?

Or the furtive one  
so isolate, so guarded  
that there's no password  
to pry it open, the one  
that spells his passions  
by paying out a sacred alphabet?

Or is it the indecipherable,  
the one heart he himself  
can never know? so  
deeply is it buried  
partly here, within, where  
there is no light partly  
there, with the stars, where  
there is no light.

## After a time

he came to realize that he loved her more than he, it was she who was shocked, shocked because it was something she'd not felt before, this *love*, the way finally seeing Paris is so different from the pictures.

You can never grasp the clarity of the butter, the round surety of each cobblestone.

So he loved her might have written *still* loved her. Had, in fact, loved her *before*, in his manner of loving the way a little emperor once loved Europe.

The only way to show it is to kill it.

By despoiling forever what she'd been, she built in him a keening desire. A ferocious desire, if not, precisely, to love, then to preserve. Maintain. So call it love. Love of this new she, shell of the earlier self, the imago now a bar of gold, but irradiated, creating its own hot shine, strident and undeterred, no hint of nostalgia, and love at your own risk: the heart expands as you contract.

When we fall out of love, what is there but to mimic love? To coddle the cancer as our own, in all its chartable phases. And like the moon, love varies. Oh, both vary moon, love but share a constancy: both suck the light from something larger.

Do you understand it? Or the ones next door, with their convoy of rust and chips in the driveway, with their vexing address of the lawn at nine each summer Sunday, do they?, these who seem to have been bound so long by it, by word and circumstance, word beyond their easy call and circumstance beyond their counting, so that when they are a public couple, so decent, so me, so you, they fit each other the way his bleeding leeches fit to Washington, or the way a tape worm fits itself precisely to its intestine.

Which is to say that there is some private value in sticking it out, or was, even if a perceived value, a faith that there is, or will be, something.

That, or that memory is like Napoleon.

## Why I like fast cars

I like fast cars with bald tires  
because they're like a marriage  
always on the rocks. You never know  
what might happen next. I like the two  
girdling white lines that run on  
forever, cross at your own risk. Like  
a marriage. I like the way the lines  
and curves recall, for me, the essence  
of defiance, daring all the skill  
in the blood to press on  
a little harder. That's what it's like  
to be alive, really alive, to feel the blood  
in your ears, a quickening  
not unlike what you feel when she says  
Sit down. We have to talk.

## When I moved, I got up early

and packed my first marriage into this box,  
my second into this smaller one,  
my third into a jar that I dropped  
while I was packing,  
and I kicked the shards  
and innards of the jar under the old couch  
that the new owners had asked me to leave. And I left

with my two boxes and some memories  
of the jar, and got into my microbus  
which still had plenty of room left  
for the various cups and saucers  
that had cracked over the years, some from  
being thrown, some under the acids of time,  
it had room for a bike with a rusted kickstand  
that would look to the casual observer  
as though I'd had children, or at least a childhood,  
and there was plenty of room for the linens I never received  
(thank god) from my great aunt in Belgravia Square,  
though she kept threatening to send them, even room  
for a good deal of promise (something my teachers  
never failed to note), promise that had diminished  
over the years, but hadn't quite fled  
yet

as I peeled out of that driveway  
and made my way over here, to this new place, this place  
you've stopped by just now with a cake in your hands,  
a smile on your face, and so here we are,  
the two of us, smiling, looking stupid, standing  
with such patience on this fine porch,

all of the day spread before us  
looking as stupid as we are  
like a fresh cloth over the rooftops.

## She ponders her ex

whatever it is she harbors  
when she speaks of him  
does not abide in speech  
yet crests at times in dream  
slight aspects, certain things  
endure beyond the will

perhaps the rough sandslide  
of him or just the lash and coil  
of him the fluted angel wings  
of him the bright unshirted mass  
of him a salted fire of skin  
of which she will not speak

## What I have learned thus far about love

Ohm manifase, ohm cundilucifus,  
Lepair mu donnas wyndas si enpar,  
Lepairna temblir swant, ledarnicus,  
Avan ti tyntavenn, avan ti swar.

Mu donnas lentra soaner meonpar,  
Malender swen del fyner dewna slee,  
Uvinder parnit windas, rendivar,  
Inpurlvent mu del vyder donnas cee.

Yablen darminder mancer rennavits.  
Salender dal remartis, syn nifrance.  
Odonn nicusi neval, annapitts  
Hee sain nevar apendice anavance.

Mavender rondil nellar menn di lun,  
Mu anavance is nothing like the sun.