

Tonasket Cabin

The Black Waterbird of Worry

2 a.m.

The great wings of the black waterbird of worry
lift from me and glide north. No hurry.
Formless and empty, it passes a dark hand
over a landscape of old snow.
The Odyssean moon stares
at the long caress,
the men devoured in the cave left
long behind. Old age
either resolves into a light, sweet breath
of self-effacement consummating in death
or else is sold into sour self-bondage,
whose only escape is death.

8 a.m.

Waking Sunday morning to close
the cabin for the winter and leave,
falling snow turns all white
in the Meadow of the Moon,
white-haired forehead so soon
quiet. At this height, space does
what it takes time to do
lower down; snow comes earlier,
stays longer, lifts late
in spring – settling on our collars
and in our hair as we work, settling
in the hush of a stilled heart.
All night, dreams of contention;
awakening to accumulated snow
and the certainty
that what once worked will no longer do.

Sitting up late at night

sitting up, late at night
I hear the sighs of my loved ones
turning in bed,
my fears of being parted from them,
the measured pace of the dogs
resettling themselves on the porch,
the soft roar of gas burning
in the heater followed by the clicking
of many quick fingers
backed by a deep bass tremulo
as the metal cools when it shuts off.
and louder than them all
the stillness in which they sound.

Crossing Two Passes

(for Jennifer)

ridges,
one fading into the next
in fog

thin garments of thought
trail out in some damp valley,
a canyon loses itself in cliff,

down trees
closing its high end,
the hills
criss-cross,
their lines

climb heights unseen,
autumn yellow surrounds
what is left,

what I no longer care
to name.

Blue Fire, Red Fire, White Fire

Blue fire, the pilot lit
Red fire below the blue
White fire at the base

Blue fire of depression
Ruby fire of wrath
White the fire that sears

Blue fire electrical flicker
Red fire eager quick leaper
White fire consuming care

Blue fire cold
Red fire burns alive
White fire purifies

Walking These Woods

Walking these woods as I do my mind, I am utterly at home. The three minds, wisdom, reason, and insight are at one. Space and time are no longer projected into the void, but illuminate this place and this moment.

startling yellow tamarack flames
the golden retriever runs ahead
tail feathers aflame
as all being flames
racing on
to catch the next afire

But do not mistake – nothing on fire but with itself, the road calm under the chill of early autumn, the quaking aspen rattle their gold coins, a high wind overhead and a carpet of needles softens the footfalls and damps the dust beneath.