

The View from Kamiak

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I'm walking Kamiak ridge,
going to an older home,
older now,
returning
to an older home.

I feel its path
in the rocks and shrubs
themselves,
they have lines
pull mine
to their center.

waiting for me – I know
– are others
who remembered,
went back
before me.

if I traverse this ridge
walk around the edge of the mountain,
crawl
up over
hanging
1000' above
mouth-opening

snow and space fall away
from hard rock,
snow edge and death
glittering in sunlight –

I'll fill,

stronger each moment,
more sure of home,
feeling the pull
of the rope present
in the rocks
themselves.

Loop Trail

Loop trail
down the back of Kamiak –
 cloven-hoof prints
 in the snow
stand stiff, alert
ready to bound.

Short-eared owl
spins me, flying behind and
 down the ridge
 a mottled brown torpedo
 suspended in wings.

Seeing him,
I nearly flew.

Here
a ridge plunges into foothills,
 a crow
 flapping across fog
 and distance
cries a 3-noted omen –
one I cannot read.

No One

Hiking Kamiak
a thin snow
the butte rolled in fog
climbing
 to a higher place,
 walking up Kamiak.

Bare rocks
outline this liveness
set in red earth
that I have.

 The summit trail – the final height
 has snow.

Climbing down,
one set of boot prints
go up,
one down.

 No one

on Kamiak.

Living in Pullman

living in Pullman
living in a detached way
living in a 10x50 trailer
with strong-willed Gene
with green carpets,
a three-tiered spider plant,
canaries,
with a center detached
going to WSU
going to do yoga every 6 a.m.
going

Rain on the Roof

rain on the roof of our trailer.
a car warming up in a driveway
down and across the street
beats an undertone.
light begins to enter the bedroom
before six a.m.
now morning lies inflated
like a blow-up toy.
it's May.
in our two rooms at the end of the hall,
neither of us want to get up.
it's raining on the roof.

Wind's Died; Gonna Be Hot Soon

Wind's died; gonna be hot soon. Getting out of bed, I put on only trunks. Later, I may put on a shirt when we barbecue spareribs in the sideyard with the neighbors. Only five weeks of this school year to go, living in this trailer with Gene; drawing to a close.

Taking down the storm windows this morning brings the heat much closer – the heat of late summer, early autumn, when we began our stay here. The year compresses into one short, full memory. Two weeks before classes started, wiring the electricity, fixing the siding, sealing the roof with Silver Seal. We got dirty, sweaty, looked forward. Then, when classes began, it was still hot. We came home, stripped to our boxers, sat out in the yard in the evening.

When winter came on, car batteries froze, the fog froze – silver mist: tree twigs, telephone wires, tall stalks of long-dead grasses in the roadside ditches, barbed wire fences – every thinnest strand coated an inch thick with white crystals, outlining and highlighting all the unnoticed background lines of our world.

Now summer creeps in again; we keep the trailer door and windows open. Our trailer has held us for a year and promises to put its long rectangular lines around our lives for several more.

stay faithful

stay faithful
to the vast wheat
hills, the slow
heat, the bell-like
clarity, the wait
on hot, dusty
unnoticed Eastern
Washington
afternoons.

First Rain in Over 30 Days

coming over the record playing
on the stereo, through
the yellowed dark –
the first rain in over 30 days
bounces off the metal roof.
lying on my yoga pad,
I hear it, soak it up –
the rich soil outside
getting fertile
again, breathing, listening.

everything falls into place
after faltering for so long,
falls simply now,
seems so inevitable –
summer's coming and my life
keeps falling into place.
listen to the rain.

Listening to the String Trio in the CUB

Washington State University

I close my eyes and form
an image, a little black diamond,
which is my own feeling
sorry for myself. It shrinks
until it disappears.

Then an autumnal joy; falling
like leaves, the notes
sail to the ground.

Emptiness

that all the force
the world can muster,
applied to an illusion,
is useless.

that, becoming the illusion
and in the act
becoming detached from it,
one escapes.

that, escaping
one SOARS.
no one knows,
no one knows.

New

No resting,
no reporting.

This state of mind –
every level's got to
learn to die.

Green Field

the green
field

lies low
on a summer's day,

dies slow
on
a
summer's
day.

the sun
lies slow

on a green field
dying slow

on a summer's
day.

For Tsietsi Mashinini

bullets
lifted an 8-year old boy –
collapsible toy
he became
 (a milk carton in an incinerator
 collapsing suddenly
 as fire bursts through all its sides
 at once)

on a Soweto day
in June

 (I saw a pair of magpies lay
 their wings to the sky and lift
 off like that,
 but clumsy compared to this boy
 on lead wings) –

he saw him,
he said.

facts like this, steely,
snub-nosed, click
his life
into place –

he is the cartridge
that has entered the chamber.

Waking from His Nap, A Three-Year Old Looks for His Mother, Arrested in Soweto

where where where
where
where where

where
where
where where where where where
WHERE WHERE WHERE WHERE WHERE

With “Mike” at Hog Heaven

Starts off having good times, good talks. Goes on to a mild preoccupation, bemusement. I barely recognize her behind this general sense of well-being. Goes on from there to painful falling in love with an image, or

w

o

m

a

n

(are you real?)

Another fun evening with Mike at old Joe Hall's listening to Hog Heaven bluegrass and drinking 2 pitchers beer in the 2 folding chairs set left right up near the stage, the pitcher set up-down on the rough plank floor between us, laughing telling stories and opinions. I finally get her to dance and she moves surprising graceful and is scared and happy and glad she did. When I drop her off, I go up to her room and talk a couple more hours into those brown eyes.

What You Said

moved through your hands
like a quick breath;
hit me like a hurricane
off the coast of Texas,
pouring over the Barrier Islands, flooding
Galveston. I'd like to say
that I expected that,
that you didn't leave me
swamped like a southern hardwood
forest shaken leaf,
branch, and limb.

Running Question to Myself, Hiking Kamiak Butte

Barbara
blonde, Texan
shy
ate strawberries.
my kisses were unwelcome.
how would she weather
on Kamiak Butte?
intrusive igneous rock,
quartzite
last of the rocks to weather.
early Thursday morning
we will climb Kamiak
(the hills roll down,
yellow flanks, unshaven.
Ponderosa pine,
sometimes thickets in ravines)
I will ask her.

Cross-Country with a Ten-Wheeler

Rumbling down the Walla Walla Valley
surprise two deer;
field on field of wheat
gold a hillside.
Blue Mts. rise out of Pendleton
where the grass at Dead Man's Pass rest stop
is soft as a mattress,
then on through La Grande, Baker, Ontario,
and down into the Boise Valley.
All afternoon crossing Idaho's fertile
plains, through Nampa to Twin Falls;
spuds. Early morning into Wyoming
from Pocatello – land you have to wrestle
in order to pass through,
whose rest stops are as tough and dried
and weather-beaten as its people.
Dead deer and rabbits litter the freeway.
Up and up and on up – Continental
Divide – the Rockies,
then the long downhill chase to Cheyenne,
shedding cloudburst water on red rock,
green trees streaked with silver
climbing out of Laramie. All day
driving into a lightning storm,
fire on the faraway peaks, flickering
and flashing. Downhill to Denver
spread like a burst of laughter on the Rockies.
Out across the Colorado plateau dark
crossing the Kansas line
in thick red dawn. Across the prairies
all the next day while the heat grows,
bending south at Salinas toward
Wichita (flat fixed by a giant black man)
to this hillside rest-stop in Kansas,
writing (half-gallon jug of warm orange juice
warm beside me) while the heat trickles off me.