

Vashon-Fauntleroy Ferry

Fauntleroy-Vashon Ferry

Woke up at 3 a.m., wind out of the southeast.
Squall still hard
when I arise at six.

On board before seven. Clouds up and down
the Sound; off to the northwest,
Southworth Ferry
hooked on the shiny worm of street
guided down to it by streetlights in the dark dawn,
riding rough waters.

Due north,
 Blake Island,
a tip of Bainbridge,
little else visible.
To the east, Fauntleroy, Lincoln Park –
the West Seattle dock
an eyed light in the winter maw.

Stand out on the deck
till the rain beats up
as the ferry heads out
from the sheltering cove.

Go inside, sip hot coffee
return to stand facing
the pickaxes of rain at the brow
of the ferry.

Dock below Lincoln Park,
 walk off the pier –
grebes float the gray water under gray skies –
still sipping the coffee.

April First

a row of daffodils, a yellow biomass
clings to the top of the bluff –
bunched together
 after the rain fell.
bunch-headed
bowing
not as straight as in March
 when ridden
by a stiff South wind for two weeks.

I press one against my eye –
the waters hidden
 there
in the petals outdo me,
collect on my clumsy lid
with the yellow impression.

an involuted leaf, I
move on down the row –
 brown, rolled
inward at the edge, crumbling
where dry;

 waiting for the split
that, reaching raw green,
leaves a tiny bead of plasma.

A Choice to Love Before

Don Juan: *A warrior, whenever he has to involve himself with believing, does it as a choice, as an expression of his innermost predilection. A warrior doesn't believe, a warrior has to believe.*

Webster's: *predilection*: n. (L. – *prae*, before, and *dilecto*, a choice, from *diligere* to love).

Twilight comes frowning out of the afternoon.
in the woodyard, I lay the axe in the chips.
the slam of an alder into the hillside 7 hours ago

has just now made the sky jump
with an unfamiliar opening.
The sun has cleared the beer bottle
on the steps, cleared the shaggy grass,
and bounds into the madrone,
heels pulsing.

I am hooked to the sun
that filters down in particles like dust
over the empty
brown bottle.

At home is Mother,
hard as alder,
 hooked to nothing,
hoarding her chips – they fly
 (a bigger axe strikes down).
The sticky buds are green,
even on the tree down in front of me.

Cutting Wood

stroke, pause;
the red axe handle
slippery with rain;
the wet chunk
of hardwood turns and digs
into the earth
by my boot
with each blow.

sweaty under my watchcap,
i whip it off –
the wind comes
quickly, a cool hand.

stop and gape
at an alder –
long swoop up
to top branches 60'
from earth
a slender curve
the graceful gesture
of a white arm.

there are some trees here
i would not cut.

Power Spot

swoop alder – thirty, sixty feet
of long trunk; no branches
for the first forty feet.
pause, leaning on red-handle axe
to contemplate
and feel it me.

so is the one isolated
in a circle of nettles,
the one on the edge of the bluff,
the crooked (wicked) one
on my right; my soul oh
i wouldn't cut it down.

To the Cat

you little hammock,
com'ere;
it's 10:30 and i'm home –
purr loud
enough to be my engine.
but you are not in the dark arena
caught by the outside spotlights,
and the ground refuses
to quicken with your black movement.
your body stiffens
over the clotting mantle of alders
in the restless sky.
your death may have found you
out in the nettles.
the wind is northerly, off the coast;
it is 10:30 p.m.

Watching the Cat Kill a Mouse

the squeaksqueaksqueak
at dusk. then

an owl

rearranges the treetops.

the alders congeal
again.
undisturbed, the cat
breaks bones. ominous,

silently,
one circle: the owl.
droves of wind
clatter through on horseback.

at the lower curve
of the driveway,
stock-still as the white
rocks, i'm watching
death as an advisor.

afterwards, i
pick up the black animal,
carry him back to the cabin.
later, he crouches lapping
water from a bowl in the sink,
unselfconscious.

Morning After Daylight Savings

loose, loitering
proceeding like a mollusk
across the day,
I remain in bed
where at 7:30
the sun like a russet potato
dug under the bamboo
shade.

I play my eyes over the room,
practicing knowing it
the first time the sun wakes me up
in spring.

Self Reflection

he jugs the apple juice container
from hand to hand
and swigs it, a humongous
salad in his belly.
the room is littered with music –
banjo with its case open on the bed;
guitar on the picnic table,
case on the bench;
mandolin hung on the wall
like a vine with an acoustic appetite.
his mind is the harmonica
with the broken reed.

Back to Empty

I feel empty tonight,
I don't know what it is –
let go of something,
like a bad teenage lovesong
played too many times
on AM radio.

All my fantasies lie inert
on the bed or die
in the fireplace, where the fire
burns low.

The people I wanted to come here,
to this cabin, to this island
still flit the corners and doorways
with unexpected presence –
but they are like the fire, now
burning out.

I've been straining for some-
thing. Maybe I've stopped.
When I was a kid, I'd hang
over the edge of the bed
on my stomach and feel
the relief rise up from my gut
when I sat up.

At Grayland, Pacific Ocean with Dave and Steve

Holding the cerebellum, the animal brain
immured in apophthegms,
we, near to men, man-brained,
move in unison to a rise above an estuary,
view the ocean.

The Pleistocene swivels in our hips,
three or four young males
out on the danger rim
stalk the backdunes,
the territorial imperative
primeval in our bones.

The high grassland drives in waves
before the wind, whipping our low-slung butts;
the wet sky combs
the wrinkles of dune grass, sits in our hair –
we roam a territory of sanderlings
and sandwort.

We hold the little convex brain,
the old one,
the clot on the shaft of spine
in abeyance with aphorisms,
come no closer
to being men.