

# 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.