

interstate
marie harris

SLOW LORIS PRESS
PITTSBURGH

~~in the~~

listing like grounded tankers:
these houses on sandbars with their tides of memory
receding--
not empty, not yet

we make our ghosts ✓
more quickly these days
they are barely old enough to give tongue ✓

there are those of us who count
the hours in a repaired lintel, a stripped floor
(recovered from linoleum rugs
some family that merely lived here,
quarreling and welcoming God knows
how many husbands of how many daughters on Thanksgivings
and Christmases, oblivious to the Indian shutters,
reckless with the wrought iron latches) ✓

these houses
in particular
we visit as though we were distant ✓
cousins paying an obligatory call
on an ailing aunt
we are uncomfortable and, at once, ✓
at home

the homes
the our dear departed

we take care of our coffins ✓
we make fit the burial places of the dreams ✓
our parents had for us —
house by house
we rebuild what once was built ✓
by a single man and a single woman
and all their desperate children

~~for J.8.~~

listing like grounded tankers:
these houses on sandbars with their tides of memory
receding--
not empty, not yet

we make our ghosts
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we make fit the burial places of the dreams
our parents had for us
house by house
we rebuild what once was built
by a single man and a single woman
and all their desperate children

the form occurs repeatedly
as a function of growth in plants and animals:
the ratio
in the chambered spirals, interstate
the arrangement of seeds in the sunflower
the pine cone

you make the irrational proportion

~~you make the works of art~~

egg
chicken
egg
home
leaving home
home

Leaving Ithaca: Buttermilk Falls
or the deep pool in Six Mile Creek where I swam,
shedding a day of indoors with my shirt and jeans
squatted naked on the warm rocks with a few friends

leaving Ithaca with the children north to Toronto
(north on I-89, west on 90
to Buffalo and across an international boundary
where even the names of the hamburger stands don't change)

three of us and our essentials

tape recorder full of music
2000 baseball trading cards
hiking boots and sweaters
typewriter

you learn
what to carry with you

aboard CNRR coach
settled and moving
out of Toronto, I imagine
hands at every smudged window
knocking for my attention
writing on the dusty glass
"Don't go! It's the same
everywhere."

pole by pole
we gather speed

north by Georgian Bay turning dark... Sudbury
west to the Soo

we sleep sitting up
slumped on each other

Thunder Bay

Kenora: Irish fog rising off the lakes
look way out the window, see the end of the train
emerging from a forest, the engine ahead entering one

Manitoba

Winnipeg at midnight
like any station at midnight
chocolate bars and magazines
standing on one foot, then the other
wondering about Winnipeg
or

Regina
Moose Jaw
Swift Current
morning approaching Medicine Hat, Alberta

crossed the whole continent
carrying the children like saddlebags

when I dashed off the train
for fresh bread and cheese
they hung out the window, yelling
as the conductor announced the minutes
till departure schooled in departures
we learn to count backwards

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

south on Rt 2 by car to Fort McLeod
west on Rt 3 over Crow's Nest Pass
B.C. to Fernie

(stopped for a few minutes at the Frank Slide
where did all that rock come from
so fast
what does it take to bury a town
instantly)

TO: my next sister's home
FROM: Ithaca, Buttermilk Falls and the deep pool in Six Mile Creek
where I swam, shedding a day of late, indoor spring
squatting naked with a few friends

TO: Annie, my next sister
FROM: Ithaca, Buttermilk Falls
a marriage of ten years

we make space for each other, pushing aside
a half-finished peanut butter and jelly sandwich,
a pile of newspaper, layer on layer

to Annie for a month in the Canadian Rockies
(the sky is a foggy weight-belt on the Three Sisters
rain, like a mud boot on the valley
the bush is rain and river)

Dear Annie

we are encysted in shiny ^{cocoons?} cocoons
collecting windshield stickers
from parking lots and town dumps

we are ~~the~~ postcards ~~of our generation~~
a forwarding address
our speech is clipped
and the grocer just begins to know us

ice has locked the steering mechanism
glare ice locks the pavement in black

I watch myself barrel north
watch the mountains widening
in the rear view mirror

behind the wheel, I believe I am in control
I make the road diminish behind me
make it disappear into a point
not unlike a taillight
red and fixed

time is distorted the way it is
on days when winter moves through the intestines
raining in weepy spasms

I shuttle back and forth over the same bridge
on the same dime

my eyes are too tired to hold the road
I sleep fitfully in a Savarin parking lot
dreaming that pieces of my life are pulling away
like trucks

you imagined the lover
I will never be I am
so sorry

tripping on the hem of it
falling backward
into the bottomless apology
I am so sorry

fog shred the edges of the horned moon
the road home
is a short memory
I reinvent ahead of the lowbeams

the children travel best at night
sleep through the New Jersey Turnpike
through the detours, the silent construction
through the night smells and neon
around pink cities
under pale pink and yellow skies:
the semidark of the east coast

the lights of tollbooths and truckstops
flicker on their faces

we lived with our mistakes
17 miles to the next exit
never have we heard such silences

each headlight cut the fog at a different angle
thin clouds arranged themselves against a giant moon
in the image of a fish skeleton

staying awake
Gethsamane

the missed exit
another accident in the accidents
of our lives together

REST AREA
in which, clean, machined, 24 hr
we might
at another time
rest

the street of schools
the street of the fishing cat
the street of the innocents
the square of the risen bread
the street of kites and ducklings

maple ave
state street
front street

we are not within walking distance

I-495 avoids Boston
starts up the tiny NH coast another road

THERE ARE NO SERVICES ON THIS ROUTE

the sand is crusty and salt whips off the rocks
at Hampton Beach
empty tide pools
footprints that remain like fingerprints
when dough has risen
the closest I come
to permanence

I carry you with me reluctantly
inside old books
in the prints at the corners of my eyes
in the pout of my son's mouth

this death
is organic:life's mulch:dead
love

starting out
late at night
knowing just that
I will avoid Boston

letters home

... we went up in the mountains and we found silver ore
and other rocks and bullet shells...we are having a ball...
guess what- by mistake I put my hand on a cactus and
guess what- I came up with 20 quills in my hand. But luckily
I was smart enough to get them out with a nail clippers
and also I fixed my glove all by myself!

the first time we talked about divorce
was in the south
when they were babies

you take this one &
I'll take that one
and I'll be in Scotland...

the goat turns in circles
the duck disappeared
the goose sat on her eggs until they rotted

I am missing something

the sails strain out from the bent mast
kelp drifts on sea-soil, the salt
dries into maps on my arms

I walk by the edge of the highway
my hair stiff with salt

bare-footed, dragging shreds of seaweed and frayed rope
a dry anchor
I look among the chicory for soil
in which to plant

for ~~Bea~~ (my father ^{!!})

you hear it in your temples
like surf behind fog
the same beat
the same pebbles and shells grinding
another cubic inch of sand
for the same beach

every year the orange rose hips
the children
the damp jigsaws

and the man with a kite
fishing without a hook in the jetstream
for silence

we leave dried layers of ourselves
in schoolyards and empty rooms
the skins are patterned
they can be read like snakeskin
a severed tree
a caterpillar
a riverbed

the molt is one kind of record
transparancies to hold up to the light

sometimes it's all we have left
the stiff skin
of friendships

the ties loosen like shoelaces
drag along the ground
develop knots
catch in bicycle wheels

out of gas
along the sinews of empire
somewhere between White River Junction
and Concord

the car runs on lunar energy
playing continuous music of the spheres
the shades of hit-and-run victims rise
off the shoulders of the road

a doe with old scars
unborn fawns
possums with tails curled around silver bumpers
racoons with radiator grilles for faces
millions of butterflies, mosquitos, ladybugs
preserved in radial perfection like ferns in shale

bits of paper emblazoned with golden arches
flutter in the breakdown lane
the battery fills with rainwater
mushrooms come and go on the carpet
moles nest in the back seat and eat it

the stationary car
the stopped wave

I hunt for missing parts of ~~my body~~ ^{my body}
a feathered pouch lies beside the car
containing fingernail parings and baby teeth

the completion of the stretch
of I-93
between here and the border
is in doubt

I am camped in the shadow of the earth
movers

the detour led to the foot of Blue Job Mt

the neighbors' sons
helped me heft my belongings
into ~~the~~ kitchen
smiled when I talked

about chickens and goats
Ball jars and a screened porch
insulation for ~~the~~ leaky walls
and the airborne attic

like a fence

pens scale the chicken wire
pale soldiers

I am a rocking chair
a lap robe

Settled

*like the tree bark along the wall
the stone placed by a shoulder of rock
the house rocking on the first tree in front*

summer

mosquitos breed in standing water

I have not moved
in a year

animals and vegetables surround me
like a fence

peas scale the chicken wire
pale soldiers

I am a rocking chair
a lap robe

Settled

*like the tree broken along the wall
the stone placed by a shoulder of frost
the house rocking on the hill like a boat*

I follow the shadow of my car
past tight white yankee houses
hardwood stacked between trees
testifies to a summer ~~of work~~

unlike the one I spent

~~letting and snowing~~

~~I might move~~

half a pig in the freezer
I pace the kitchen

what has altered
the pitch of my friendships

the hurricane
moves to the northeast

September rain
days of it
for nothing
nothing needs water

the dirt roads are slick with storm
and the leaves glow

~~you~~ ^{he} will never leave me
even though today ~~you~~ ^{he} wants
something warm and dry

I am slowing into the cider-cold
learning the limits
of latitude

like homing pigeons with iridescent necks
they find me

a small iron pot tracks me to every stove
the fat Japanese kettle boils all waters
keeping inside it the stain
of each deep earth I have made into tea
I can't lose the glass ashtray
the wooden bowl surfaces, flotsam from the wreck
of my stubborn marriage

the window frosts over into its own white landscape
and I pull the quilt that followed me from Connecticut Hill
around my shoulders

big gray-green squashes
have done their best to winter
in my kitchen
I have let them stay too long
they change color
yellow
and grow soft in the fitfull warmth

out of habit I preserve nothing
as though winter will freeze
what I need: the green apples on their branches
carrots in the ground

your eyes,

~~the rattled notes of the guinea fowl~~

the rattled notes of the guinea fowl

or-- winter will freeze the things

I need: oil

in the lumbering car

~~the road away from here~~

the road away from here

instead of stacking apple and split oak
or clearing what snow will bury
instead of mulching the ragged garden
protecting mock orange
grape vine, thyme,

I pack books like winter hay
choose which houseplants to take
which lamps

I will remember,
build
one day
from notes scratched on envelopes
and memories in my hands,
from information stored in attics and barns
and the trunks of dying cars,
accounts passed by word of mouth
from clippings

the house that will hold all of us: children
lovers, family, neighbors, animals

MILK

The goat comes to me in a dream of families.
I bring her hay and grain and water warmed against
the March air, pull the first, thick, yellow milk
from under her until it flows in hot quarts into the pail.

*... my breasts are swollen. I don't know how; the baby is frantic
for food and my body will not let down. My son tastes salt in his milk,
hears a new pulse, cries and sucks.*

Head at her flank, listening to her complicated digestion
move like unfamiliar scales, I bring down the milk: thumb
and forefinger circled at the top of the teat to stop the flow
backward into the udder, sucking down with three fingers
and palm. I squat in the hay of her stall,
listening.

...he pushes at me. I give him more. He sings in his sleep.

After the last milk squirts into the pail, there is more.
Nudge the udder. There is more and it is the sweetest
and richest. Strip out the milk and the goat will give more
next time. Strip her dry.

*...I wake to his need. Crying brings me out of sleep; crying
pulls me out of half-finished dreams. I am reluctant. My milk is sour.*

It's early. I am milking the goat and looking at the maple
red with spring. It's early. I am nursing the baby and looking out
gray windows. The letters of my name are spelled in milk. Milk
is the perfume I wear.

~~My name will be spelled in the milk they have heard. My singing
will be the first of the milk they have heard.~~

The letters of my name spell a constellation.
No one will set a course by any of its stars.

78

. *****

my days lose shape
and that is spring

or I am lost

I am lost
near home

you saw me start off with a basket
now it's full of mushrooms
white angels
red angels

I should have told you I meant to leave
by the woods

29
1/11

in the barn the goat stalls are empty
the pine boards exhale their ghosts
chaff filters down spider silk

the factory of the year
shuts down

another place

pigeons putter by a curb
and herring gulls, starlings
some kind of city sparrow

*just a yard full of chickens
mallard, white china geese*

I am not rooti^{ed}~~ng~~
but anchored, like a tug
in fog

it's not too late to begin again
this time I will make a life
solitary as a night-hunting bird
useless as an earring

I am seeing things

the undermind jaw fused like thermalpane glass

lit by the heart soft and out of condition

splinters I am not prepared

the barrier of last spring's trillium

full of what your house

seeing things with the equilibrium of a painting

your face turned upside down

your face your broccoli and pork

your face your banked fire

not prepared
by another single moment

~~not prepared~~

I am flying
and staying put
like a tree

I am seeing things

the undersides of leaves
lit by the river
splinters of fish
the berries of last spring's trillium
full of winter

seeing things clearly
your face

your face

you hear me laugh
in my sleep

I ask you if the sound
was an iced and snowy pine
loosing its limbs in a warm March wind

we conspire in the burning
of the shingled and intricate
nest of sleeping wasps

these small terrors
bring us close

I watched the whole morning
pine siskins taking turns at the sunflower seeds
between onslaughts of grosbeak

I walked over much of the afternoon
tracking dogs in the snow on the pond

and this evening hesitates by the cookstove

the groundhog has seen
or missed
its shadow

this is the life
~~come in~~

cattails
boneset
fields of goldenrod
elderberry
wild mints

the food and the remedy
the decoration

Mother
we are of an age.
We have had done with babies.
Neither of us will ever again
smell sour at the shoulder
measure liquids carefully
sing and sing
rock with fatigue
repeat the rhythms of sleep
sleep sleep.

I left you in the doorway
of my wedding
waving a monogrammed towel.

Now my boys
are gone away
too soon.
Too soon, you say:
they are necessary
pieces in my puzzle family,
the sons
of my first
careless daughter.

italics

Come here, you say to them,
come home.

for William and Sebastian

.....
The highway runs across the pools
where the seaweeds grow.
Everybody likes the highway
but it's made a crack
between the ocean
and my father
and my mind. Suyama Sadae, 10

~~It has been 20 years since the first
interstate pavement was poured--
since the first family
was asked to leave its home, since
the first red, white and blue
interstate shield was posted.~~

Rosenthal & King; Boston GLOBE; Sept. '76

you heard the highway
in my pulse
you were powerless against my time
you were passengers

it's an old Indian trick,
my friend used to say:
walking backwards in the snow

you have learned to walk back
wearing a path of memory
to ~~the house~~ every house

sentences ran on for two or three years
before they broke
into new paragraphs of location

your speech is inflected
rich with geographies

* * * * *

there was not enough
I sent you from my table

don't come home
nothing will grow here
the land will turn
to juniper and berry thickets

grow up

* * * * *

(cont'd)

on this quiet road the news arrives slowly
from all the places I have sent you
and when it comes the words are smudged

it is raining

I won't hear of it
for years

* * * * *

the kitchen is lit with lanterns
votive candles of grape jam
peach butter
cider wine in green bottles

this is the kitchen light
fueled by years of anger
~~the wick burns clean~~

~~come home now~~
~~visit in my kitchen~~
~~I will be your grandmother~~

come home now
(~~visit in my kitchen~~
the wick burns clean
visit in my kitchen
I will be your grandmother

last summer I planted packets of defeated corn
wilting beets
lettuce that would not head
vulnerable squash
an envelope of nasturtiums labeled:
Losing Heart, Leggy

I will never feel comfortable with gardens
men or children

my seasons of success
I attribute to the weather
or the moon
and so will always find your love
an amazement
an unexpected bounty of parsley

42

At a deepening
of the Isinglass River
I lie down in stones and tea-colored water.
I think: be careful. Do not say
home. The bones
of that word mend slowly.

the form occurs repeatedly
as a function of growth in plants and animals:
the ratio
in the chambered spirals, interstate
the arrangement of seeds in the sunflower
the pine cone

you make the irrational proportion

~~you make the works of art~~

egg
chicken
egg
home
leaving home
home

Leaving Ithaca: Buttermilk Falls
or the deep pool in Six Mile Creek where I swam,
shedding a day of indoors with my shirt and jeans
squatting naked on the warm rocks with a few friends

leaving Ithaca with the children north to Toronto
(north on I-89, west on 90
to Buffalo and across an international boundary
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tape recorder full of music
2000 baseball trading cards
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you learn
what to carry with you

aboard CNRR coach
settled and moving
out of Toronto, I imagine
hands at every smudged window
knocking for my attention
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"Don't go! It's the same
everywhere."

pole by pole
we gather speed

north by Georgian Bay turning dark... Sudbury
west to the Soo

we sleep sitting up
slumped on each other

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Kenora: Irish fog rising off the lakes
look way out the window, see the end of the train
emerging from a forest, the engine ahead entering one

Manitoba

Winnipeg at midnight
like any station at midnight
chocolate bars and magazines
standing on one foot, then the other
wondering about Winnipeg
or

Regina.
Moose Jaw
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morning approaching Medicine Hat, Alberta

crossed the whole continent
carrying the children like saddlebags

when I dashed off the train
for fresh bread and cheese
they hung out the window, yelling
as the conductor announced the minutes
till departure schooled in departures
we learn to count backwards

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

south on Rt 2 by car to Fort McLeod
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(stopped for a few minutes at the Frank Slide
where did all that rock come from
so fast
what does it take to bury a town
instantly)

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FROM: Ithaca, Buttermilk Falls and the deep pool in Six Mile Creek
where I swam, shedding a day of late, indoor spring
squatting naked with a few friends

TO: Annie, my next sister
FROM: Ithaca, Buttermilk Falls
a marriage of ten years

we make space for each other, pushing aside
a half-finished peanut butter and jelly sandwich,
a pile of newspaper, layer on layer

to Annie for a month in the Canadian Rockies
(the sky is a foggy weight-belt on the Three Sisters
rain, like a mud boot on the valley
the bush is rain and river)

Dear Annie

\$

we are encysted in shiny ^{cocoons} cocoons
collecting windshield stickers
from parking lots and town dumps

we are ~~the~~ postcards ~~of our generation~~
a forwarding address
our speech is clipped
and the grocer ~~just~~ begins to know us

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ice has locked the steering mechanism
glare ice locks the pavement in black

I watch myself barrel north
watch the mountains widening
in the rear view mirror

behind the wheel, I believe I am in control
I make the road diminish behind me
make it disappear into a point
not unlike a taillight
~~red~~ and fixed

65
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time is distorted the way it is
on days when winter moves through ~~the~~^{the} intestines
raining in weepy spasms

I shuttle back and forth over the same bridge
on the same dime

my eyes are too tired to hold the road
I sleep fitfully in a Savarin parking lot
dreaming that pieces of my life are pulling away
like trucks

10
A

you imagined the lover
I will never be I am
so sorry

tripping on the hem of it
falling backward
into the bottomless apology
I am so sorry

fog shreds the edges of the horned moon
the road home
is a short memory
I reinvent ahead of the lowbeams

47

the children travel best at night
sleep through the New Jersey Turnpike
through the detours, the silent construction
through the night smells and neon
around pink cities
under pale pink and yellow skies:
the semidark of the east coast

the lights of tollbooths and truckstops
flicker on their faces

AB

we lived with our mistakes
17 miles to the next exit
(never have we heard such silences)

each headlight cut the fog at a different angle
thin clouds arranged themselves against a giant moon
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staying awake
Gethsemane

the missed exit
another accident in the accidents
of our lives together

REST AREA
in which, clean, machined, 24 hr
we might
at another time
rest

9
X

the street of schools
the street of the fishing cat
the street of the innocents
the square of the risen bread
the street of kites and ducklings

maple ave
state street
front street

we are not within walking distance

10

I-495 avoids Boston
starts up the tiny NH coast another road

THERE ARE NO SERVICES ON THIS ROUTE

the sand is crusty and salt whips off the rocks
at Hampton Beach
empty tide pools
footprints that remain like fingerprints
when dough has risen
~~the closest I come~~
~~to permanence~~

I carry you with me reluctantly
inside old books
in the prints at the corners of my eyes
in the pout of my son's mouth

this death
is organic:life's mulch:dead
love

starting out
late at night
knowing just that
I will avoid Boston

U
PB

letters home

... we went up in the mountains and we found silver ore
and other rocks and bullit shells...we are having a ball...
guess what- by mistake I put my hand on a cactus and
guess what- I came up with 20 quills in my hand. But luckely
I was smart enough to get them out with a nail clippers
and also I fixed my glove all by myself!

the first time we talked about divorce
was in the south
when they were babies

you take this one &
I'll take that one
and I'll be in Scotland...

the goat turns in circles
the duck disappeared
the goose sat on her eggs until they rotted

I am missing something

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X

the sails strain out from the bent mast
kelp drifts on sea-soil, the salt
dries into maps on my arms

I walk by the edge of the highway
my hair stiff with salt

bare-footed, dragging shreds of seaweed and frayed rope
a dry anchor
I look among the chicory for soil
in which to plant

LB
15

~~for Dad my father~~

he his
you hear it in your temples
like surf behind fog
the same beat
the same pebbles and shells grinding
another cubic inch of sand
for the same beach

close
up
(every year the orange rose hips
the children
the damp jigsaws

my father his
~~and the man~~ with a kite
fishing without a hook in the jetstream
for silence

15
18

you moved
from unlikely places
starting at the wrist you expected
your body to follow
or twisting
your neck you waited for the leg
to fill the circle

there is no direct route from Denmark
to Vermont
no one language

is there any point
on the road
on which
you abandon
it all
where crying or laying your head on the horn
or tying a white handkerchief to the doorhandle
would summon help

what to do with an elbow
or a Mexican verb
how to cross bodies of water
where to place a foot

your body explained itself
apologized
the best you could do was keep it warm
and washed and bandaged

now you move
like a dancer

of a piece

5
A

we leave dried layers of ourselves
in schoolyards and empty rooms
the skins are patterned
they can be read like snakeskin
a severed tree
a caterpillar
a riverbed

the molt is one kind of record
transparancies to hold up to the light

sometimes it's all we have left
the stiff skin
of friendships

16
X

the ties loosen like shoelaces
drag along the ground
develop knots
catch in bicycle wheels

10
6

now it's my mother who's moving she worries for me in her dreams
moving! it must be like ripping
the tree-climbing tree
out of the ground in winter
~~she may take the past with her~~
held together by roots

a piece of the ground
a piece of the frozen sky

when my mother hits the road
with her remaining children and little left
of her former life

I stay up late
waiting for the phone call
saying she's arrived

safely:
my daughter

13
B
B

out of gas
along the sinews of empire
somewhere between White River Junction
and Concord

the car runs on lunar energy
playing continuous music of the spheres
the shades of hit-and-run victims rise
off the shoulders of the road

a doe with old scars
unborn fawns
possums with tails curled around silver bumpers
racoons with radiator grilles for faces
millions of butterflies, mosquitos, ladybugs
preserved in radial perfection like ferns in shale

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the completion of the stretch
of I-93
between here and the border
is in doubt

I am camped in the shadow of the earth
movers

20
7/2

the detour led to the foot of Blue Job Mt

the neighbors' sons
helped me heft my belongings
into ~~your~~ kitchen
smiled when I talked

~~the~~ his

about chickens and goats
Ball jars and a screened porch
insulation for ~~your~~ leaky walls
and the airborne attic

peas, scales the chicken wire
pale soldiers

I sat a rocking chair
a lap robe

settled

like the tree broken along the wall
the stone placed by a shoulder of frost
the house rocking on the hill like a boat

21
23

summer

mosquitos breed in standing water

I have not moved
in a year

animals and vegetables surround me
like a fence

peas scale the chicken wire
pale soldiers

I am a rocking chair
a lap robe

settled

like the tree broken along the wall
the stone placed by a shoulder of frost
the house rocking on the hill like a boat

22
22

the hurried
down to the
September
days of it
for nothing
nothing need
I follow the shadow of my car
past tight white yankee houses
hardwood stacked between trees
testifies to a summer
unlike the one I spent

the dirt roads are slick with storm
and the leaves
what has altered
the pitch of my friendships
half a pig in the freezer
I pace the kitchen

you will never leave me
even though today you want
something warm and dry

the hurricane
moves to the northeast

September rain
days of it
for nothing
nothing needs water

the dirt roads are slick with storm
and the leaves glow

he you will never leave me *he*
even though today ~~you~~ want
something warm and dry

24

I am slowing into the cider-cold
learning the limits
of latitude

25
27

like homing pigeons with iridescent necks
they find me

a small iron pot tracks me to every stove
the fat Japanese kettle boils all waters
keeping inside it the stain
of each deep earth I have made into tea
I can't lose the glass ashtray
the wooden bowl surfaces, flotsam from the wreck
of my stubborn marriage

the window frosts over into its own white landscape
and I pull the quilt that followed me from Connecticut Hill
around my shoulders

26
78

big gray-green squashes
have done their best to winter
in my kitchen
I have let them stay too long
they change color
yellow
and grow soft in the fitfull warmth

out of habit I preserve nothing
as though winter will freeze
what I need: the green apples on their branches
carrots in the ground

~~your eyes,~~

~~smiling~~

the rattled notes of the guinea fowl

or-- winter will freeze the things

I need: oil

in the lumbering car

~~your smile~~

the road away from here

28

instead of stacking apple and split oak
or clearing what snow will bury
instead of mulching the ragged garden
protecting mock orange
grape vine, thyme,

I pack books like winter hay
choose which houseplants to take
which lamps

I will remember,
build
one day
from notes scratched on envelopes
and memories in my hands,
from information stored in attics and barns
and the trunks of dying cars,
accounts passed by word of mouth
from clippings

the house that will hold all of us: children
lovers, family, neighbors, animals

I am wintering in New Hampshire

I can hear every sound
in the icy silence
the fire cracks like iced branches

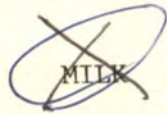
the goose waits in ambush just outside
the kitchen door

I will not breathe again
until I inhale the air under the lakes
in summer

Belleme
Poetry
Postcard

It's early. I am milking the goat and looking at the maple
red with spring. It's early. I am nursing the baby and looking out
gray windows. The letters of my name are spelled in milk. Milk
is the perfume I wear.

My stars will forget what they have heard. My fingers
will come up, or voice will not answer.
The letters of my name spell a constellation.
No one will set a course by any of its stars.



The goat comes to me in a dream of families.
I bring her hay and grain and water warmed against
the March air, pull the first, thick, yellow milk
from under her until it flows in hot quarts into the pail.

*... my breasts are swollen. I don't know how; the baby is frantic
for food and my body will not let down. My son tastes salt in his milk,
hears a new pulse, cries and sucks.*

Head at her flank, listening to her complicated digestion
move like unfamiliar scales, I bring down the milk: thumb
and forefinger circled at the top of the teat to stop the flow
backward into the udder, sucking down with three fingers
and palm. I squat in the hay of her stall,
listening.

...he pushes at me. I give him more. He sings in his sleep.

After the last milk squirts into the pail, there is more.
Nudge the udder. There is more and it is the sweetest
and richest. Strip out the milk and the goat will give more
next time. Strip her dry.

*...I wake to his need. Crying brings me out of sleep; crying
pulls me out of half-finished dreams. I am reluctant. My milk is sour.*

It's early. I am milking the goat and looking at the maple
red with spring. It's early. I am nursing the baby and looking out
gray windows. The letters of my name are spelled in milk. Milk
is the perfume I wear.

~~My ears will forget what they have heard. My fingers
will seize up, my voice will not answer.~~
The letters of my name spell a constellation.
No one will set a course by any of its stars.

my days lose shape
and that is spring

or I am lost

I am lost
near home

^{he}
~~you~~ saw me start off with a basket
now it's full of mushrooms
white angels
red angels

I should have told ^{him}~~you~~ I meant to leave
by the woods

in the barn the goat stalls are empty
the pine boards exhale their ghosts
chaff filters down spider silk

the factory of the year
shuts down

oh the dreams ~~you have~~ ^{he has}
after she goes

such blue eyes
lean limbs
energy

look at her
in the water, swimming away
you might reel her in like a sunfish
and she would flop on the wet dock, spit cold water
from the bottom of the lake

~~you~~ ^{he} remembers her best
when she's gone

at her best
in ~~your~~ ^{his} dream for ~~yourself~~ ^{himself}.

another place

pigeons putter by a curb
and herring gulls, starlings,
some kind of city sparrow

just a yard full of chickens
mallard, white china geese

I am not rooted
but anchored, like a tug
in fog

it's not too late to begin again
this time I will make a life
solitary as a night-hunting bird
useless as an earring

I am flying
and staying put
like a tree

willow

honey

fields of accident

slimberry

wild mate

the food and the ready

the decoration

jaw fused like thermalpane glass

heart soft and out of condition

I am not prepared

for your house

with the equilibrium of a painting

turned upside down

your broccoli and pork

your banked fire

not prepared

by another single moment

for you

I am flying

and staying put

like a tree

cattails
boneset
fields of goldenrod
elderberry
wild mints

the food and the remedy
the decoration

I am seeing things

the undersides of leaves
lit by the river
splinters of fish
the berries of last spring's trillium
full of winter

seeing things clearly
your face

(your face) .

you hear me laugh
in my sleep

I ask you if the sound
was an iced and snowy pine
loosing its limbs in a warm March wind

I watched the whole morning
pine siskins taking turns at the sunflower seeds
between onslaughts of grosbeak

I walked over much of the afternoon
tracking dogs in the snow on the pond

and this evening hesitates by the cookstove

the groundhog has seen
or missed
its shadow

this is the life
come in |

out

Put 3rd
to last.

Mother
we are of an age.
We have had done with babies.
Neither of us will ever again
smell sour at the shoulder
measure liquids carefully
sing and sing
rock with fatigue
repeat the rhythms of sleep
sleep sleep.

I left you in the doorway
of my wedding
waving a monogrammed towel.

Now my boys
are gone away
too soon.

"Too soon," you say;
they are necessary
pieces in my puzzle family,
the sons
of my first
careless daughter."

italics

Come here, you say to them,
come home.

my sons
for William and Sebastian

.....
The highway runs across the pools
where the seaweeds grow.
Everybody likes the highway
but it's made a crack
between the ocean
and my father
and my mind. Suyama Sadae, 10

~~It has been 20 years since the first
interstate pavement was poured--
since the first family
was asked to leave its home, since
the first red, white and blue
interstate shield was posted.~~

~~Rosenthal & King; Boston GLOBE; Sept. '76~~

my sons,
you heard the highway
in my pulse
you were powerless against my time
you were passengers

it's an old Indian trick,
my friend used to say:
walking backwards in the snow

you have learned to walk back
wearing a path of memory
to ~~the houses~~ *every house*

sentences ran on for two or three years
before they broke
into new paragraphs of location

your speech is inflected
rich with geographies

* * * * *

there was not enough
I sent you from my table

don't come home
nothing will grow here
the land will turn
to juniper and berry thickets

grow up

* * * * *

44
44

(cont'd)

on this quiet road the news arrives slowly
from all the places I have sent you
and when it comes the words are smudged

it is raining

I won't hear of it
for years

* * * * *

the kitchen is lit with lanterns
votive candles of grape jam
peach butter
cider wine in green bottles

this is the kitchen light
fueled by years of anger

come home now
the wick burns clean

visit in my kitchen
I will be your grandmother

45
B

last summer I planted packets of defeated corn
wilting beets
lettuce that would not head
vulnerable squash
an envelope of nasturtiums labeled:
Losing Heart, Leggy

I will never feel comfortable with gardens
men or children

my seasons of success
I attribute to the weather
or the moon
and so will always find your love
an amazement
an unexpected bounty of parsley

46
58

At a deepening
of the Isinglass River
I lie down in stones and tea-colored water.
I think: be careful. Do not say
home. The bones
of that word mend slowly.

we conspire in the burning
of the shingled and intricate
nest of sleeping wasps

these small terrors
bring us close

— Work —
on it

~~somewhere on the back roads~~
~~the car is stopped~~
~~fog has poisoned its black veins~~
~~muffled its cough~~

my days lose shape
and that is spring

or I am lost

I am lost

==
—

I am wintering in New Hampshire

7 the goose waits in ambush just outside
the kitchen door

I will not breathe again
until I inhale the air under the lakes / in summer

I can hear every sound
in this icy silence
~~even the fire~~ cracks like iced branches
~~sounds like branches moving in the chill factor~~

~~birds crash through brittle air~~

~~I report the accidents~~

now it's my mother who's moving
moving! it must be like ripping
the tree-climbing tree
out of the ground in winter
~~she may take the past with her~~
held together by roots
a piece of the ground
a piece of the frozen sky

when my mother hits the road
with her remaining children and little left
of her former life

I stay up late
waiting for the phone call
saying she's arrived

safely:
my daughter

*this seems of locked somehow -
a sort of obvious statement that
is implied through your imagery*

the woman who cut her hair
moved a long distance
in thirty miles and ten days

some moves might as well be across countries
might as well indicate
new tongues
new mouths

is there any point
on the road
on which
you abandon
it all
where crying or laying your head on the horn
or tying a white handkerchief to the doorhandle
would summon help

7 seems to refer to complex
things it doesn't quite reveal

This seems to be the crux or strength of this section - it feels as though
it could be inter-spliced with the next poem "for Susan", perhaps
often. In stanza, I would make a whole of the 2 -

~~for Susan~~

you moved
from unlikely places
starting at the wrist you expected
your body to follow
or twisting
your neck you waited for the leg
to fill the circle

there is no direct route from Denmark
to Vermont
no one language
~~that suffices~~

is there any point

what to do with an elbow
or a Mexican verb
how to cross bodies of water
where to place a foot

your body explained itself
apologized
the best you could do was keep it warm
and washed and
bandaged

now you move
like a dancer

of a piece

oh the dreams you have
after she goes

such blue eyes
lean limbs
energy

look at her
in the water, swimming away
you might reel her in like a sunfish
and she would flop on the wet dock, spit cold water
from the bottom of the lake

you remember her best
when she's gone

at her best
in your dream for yourself

jaw fused like thermalpane glass
heart soft and out of condition
I am not prepared for you, ~~xxxxxxx~~

~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
your house
with the equilibrium of a painting
turned upside down *enough*
made, like ~~xxxxxxxx~~ the pork and broccoli ~~and~~
~~xxxxxxxx~~ on the cookstove
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
to feed a starving woman,
by hand

your house
with the equilibrium of a painting
turned upside down

your broccoli and pork
your banked fire

not prepared/ by another
single moment
~~for this~~

I am flying
and staying put
like a tree

summer

mosquitos breed in standing water

I have not moved
in a year

animals and vegetables surround me
like a fence

peas scale the chicken wire like pale soldiers
I am a rocking chair
a lap robe

settled

like the tree broken along the wall
the stone placed by a shoulder of frost
the house rocking on the hill like a boat

I am flying
and staying put
like a tree

body tense on the snow-narrow streets
jaw fused like thermalpane glass
heart soft and out of condition

wonderful - it is tough &
wonderful hurt

I am not ready for you
feel my heart contract like a dancer's diaphragm

in what ^{sort of} movement does this
happen?

not prepared
by even one other moment
for this one

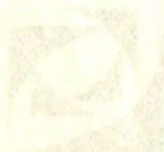
startled into morning
by a note on the floor

your absence

Put the note in at this point
then a space =

then "your absence"

— (it activates his presence & the
lack of it more —)



Come to dinner tomorrow
or at the weekend

a house with the equilibrium
of a painting turned upside down

it must be ^{my} the fever
gives this place the color of memory
sharpens the steam from covered dishes on the stove
slows the night and unlocks the spine

built into a lap of rock
under the wind

it must be the cold
the thick head and cough (the low over the quiet work)
has me docile
curled on the rag rug
imagining the men's suits torn into its pattern

purring like a solitary cat
like a kettle at the back of the stove
like a spring snow

it must be the hour
drifting toward midnight
the meal
the fire
the wine

This series too simple to be really felt as you are feeling it
isn't it his making of the meal, his building the fire, pouring the wine
9 months gestures of nurturing, caring, coming from a man
towards your closed
a needy self that
didn't even know
how starved it was

flying
and staying put like a tree

the coaxing heat
the silences
a holding of breath (towards what?)
a wish (what does the wish risk or border on?)

There can be no other explanation

This may
work, depending upon
revisions - but it risks being just a bit
cloy in the pop-song category of conclusions -

all transfer to first section

2

Can you develop this merge with
a few details to set the scene
infer your vision
too close to have
soft picture
Bly- is to
clicks
make it more
explicit

ideas, the form
remains abstract
is embodied

you have given me a stillness of days
a rain so soft
it's held in pine nets
gathers in pools on oak leaves

NEW HAVEN

I knew my place
like the back of your hand

CHAPEL HILL

not before or since
have my lungs had to struggle so
for air
my legs pushed me through a dream of flight
my voice had in it a panic
that brought dogs on empty lawns
to nervous attention
kept them restless for hours

AURORA

the square house
tightened about us

ITHACA

stars crept across a lens
delicate light tracks that arced
off both edges of night
the imprint, all I ever saw,
took into account nothing
of the sunny places
the hills and the windy acres

PORTSMOUTH

new fingerings

afternoon fog
nights alone
a perfect A

CENTER BARNSTEAD

winter taught me everything
I know

"Dictates of terrain and potential local needs seldom concerned remote groups of profit-motivated proprietors; hence the range roads defied New Hampshire's glacially inscribed terrain. It is recorded that one such road in Gilmanton ascended 200 feet in a quarter-mile, rendering itself virtually useless."

we cut a path through the woods
the direction is SSE
by the time the scraps of red marker-cloth
have rotted off their branches
our feet will remember the way
alongside a boulder
past the forked maple
following the line
of least brushy resistance

we go on foot along numberless roads
of our making
to the borders

NEW HAVEN

I knew my place
like the back of your hand

CHAPEL HILL

not before or since
have my lungs had to struggle so
for air
my legs pushed me through a dream of flight
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afternoon fog
nights alone
a perfect A

CENTER BARNSTEAD

winter taught me everything
I know

summer

mosquitos breed in standing water

I have not moved
in a year

animals and vegetables surround me
like a fence

peas scale the chicken wire
pale soldiers

I am a rocking chair
a lap robe

'But listen--what we prepared
to have, we have.'

for Finn and Linda

God knows, we dug it under
often enough.

In those days
we waited through spring snows
and frosts for the shoots.
We blamed woodchucks
or cutworms, blamed
each other.

What we prepared
to get, we got.

Perhaps we have learned
to plant when the moon is right,
to walk July's rows
greeting what thrives
by what grace we know not.

The same seeds,
soil, water--
a new weather.

"Dictates of terrain and potential local needs seldom concerned remote groups of profit-motivated proprietors; hence the range roads defied New Hampshire's glacially inscribed terrain. It is recorded that one such road in Gilmanton ascended 200 feet in a quarter-mile, rendering itself virtually useless."

we cut a path through the woods
the direction is SSE
by the time the scraps of red marker-cloth
have rotted off their branches
our feet will remember the way
alongside a boulder
past the forked maple
following the line
(of least brushy resistance)

we go on foot along numberless roads
of our making
to the borders

you have given me a stillness of days
a rain so soft
it's held in pine nets
gathers in pools on oak leaves

you hear me laugh
in my sleep

I ask you if the sound
was an iced and snowy pine
loosing its limbs in a warm March wind

78
DARLEY

Suppression
1944-1945

listing like grounded tankers:
these houses on sandbars with their tides of memory
receding--
not empty, not yet

we take our ghosts
more quickly these days
they are rarely old enough to give tongue

there are those of us who count
the hours in a repaired lintel, a stripped floor
(recovered from linoleum rugs
some family that merely lived here,
quarreling and welcoming God knew
how many husbands of how many daughters on Thanksgiving
and Christmases, oblivious to the Indian shutters,
reckless with the wrought iron latches)

these homes:
in particular
we visit as though we were distant
coasting paying an obligatory call
on an ailing aunt
we are uncomfortable and, at once,
at home

III
PARSLEY

the homes
our dear departed

we take care of our coffins
we make fit the burial places of the dreams
our parents had for us
house by house
we rebuild what once was built
by a single man and a single woman
and all their daughters and children

~~THESE~~.

listing like grounded tankers:
these houses on sandbars with their tides of memory
receding--
not empty, not yet

we make our ghosts
more quickly these days
they are barely old enough to give tongue

there are those of us who count
the hours in a repaired lintel, a stripped floor
(recovered from linoleum rugs
some family that merely lived here,
quarreling and welcoming God knows
how many husbands of how many daughters on Thanksgivings
and Christmases, oblivious to the Indian shutters,
reckless with the wrought iron latches)

these houses:
in particular
we visit as though we were distant
cousins paying an obligatory call
on an ailing aunt
we are uncomfortable and, at once,
at home

the homes
our dear departed

we take care of our coffins
we make fit the burial places of the dreams
our parents had for us
house by house
we rebuild what once was built
by a single man and a single woman
and all their desperate children

oh the dreams you have
after she goes

such blue eyes
lean limbs
energy

look at her
in the water, swimming away
you might reel her in like a sunfish
and she would flop on the wet dock, spit cold water
from the bottom of the lake

you remember her best
when she's gone

at her best
in your dream for yourself

I am wintering in New Hampshire

I can hear every sound
in the icy silence
the fire cracks like iced branches

the goose waits in ambush just outside
the kitchen door

I will not breathe again
until I inhale the air under the lakes
in summer

big gray-green squashes
have done their best to winter
in my kitchen
I have let them stay too long
they change color
yellow
and grow soft in the fitfull warmth

your head
your body
your feet
your hands
your neck
your face
to fill the air

there is no direct road from Denmark
to Vermont
no one language

in the new world
in the new road
in the new
in the new
in the new
in the new

where crying or laying your head on the horn
or tying a white handkerchief to the doorhandle
would some help



WINTERING OVER

how to cross bodies of water
how to place a foot

your body
your feet
your hands
your neck
your face
to fill the air

now you know
like a dancer

of a place

you moved
from unlikely places
starting at the wrist you expected
your body to follow
or twisting
your neck you waited for the leg
to fill the circle

there is no direct route from Denmark
to Vermont
no one language

is there any point
on the road
on which
you abandon
it all
where crying or laying your head on the horn
or tying a white handkerchief to the doorhandle
would summon help

what to do with an elbow
or a Mexican verb
how to cross bodies of water
where to place a foot

your body explained itself
apologized
the best you could do was keep it warm
and washed and bandaged

now you move
like a dancer

of a piece

I

FORWARDING ADDRESS