



Denis Wood's

TURNING

An Analysis of Man-Environment Relations

Raleigh, North Carolina
15 August 1976

for Ingrid on her birthday

TURNING

Desiderata

I thought
to write this afternoon.
Instead I spent it
emptying gutters.

I'd prefer writing, but
how pleasant
to read the paper on the porch
and not get soaked.

Not to Mention: Shadows on the Wall

I stand and walk
into the bathroom.
I drop my pants.
The belt buckle thuds to the floor.
I pull down my underpants
and sit.

Sometimes,
that's it.

It's Magic

Sweat gathers beneath my eyes.
My glasses slide down my nose.
With my shoulder, I try to nudge them back,
my sudsy hands would only smudge them.
For a second they fit, snug behind the ears;
then slip.
It's hot work
washing dishes in the summertime.
The radio is playing
and Pilot is singing "It's magic...
never believe it's not so..."

I pull a plate
from beneath the running water:
Presto!
It's clean!

The Lawn

I have always regarded
cutting the lawn
as an exercise
in the advantage of geometry
over brawn.

As I cut I calculate
the route
that will cut most grass
with fewest strokes.
Each time I do it differently—
I think—
having forgotten the subtle conclusions
reached
in the last encounter.

This Is a Rhetorical Question

I wonder if Homer
chomping sticks I throw him
counts
as an agent
of the catabolic process?

If he does,
so must I.

Running Down

The record is scratched.
Now and then a groove
is repeated again and again
until I move the arm myself.
The old amplifier
plays now one channel, now the other.

I am out of underpants.
Nothing dries in this climate.
Mold grows on the shower walls
and the house smells musty.
I have broken all the glasses
in the last two weeks
smashing them
accidentally
in the sink.

In another day or two
I'll turn thirty
and then
maybe the sun will shine.

Being Used

When she puts the silver on the table
spoon and fork
knife and napkin
it shines
dully in the light
inviting use
and admiration
of metal and craft.
It's nice to eat with—
smooth and balanced
almost tasteless.

Afterwards: dirty silverware.

Small Amends

They have promised me another comet,
nothing fancy,
midway between
zenith and ground,
ten sharp!
in the northeast sky.

I'll stay
up to see it—
I'm a glutton
for natural occurrences.

A full eclipse will keep me up all night,
and my great regret
is to not have seen
the northern lights.

Maybe this guy
will make
some small amends.

Owen Wister Wrote This

After the meal
he
could not prevent her
helping him
make everything clean.

You can even get a full glass of beer...

It's dark now

but

unbearably

hot.

Breathing or drowning:

who can tell?

Not late,

I walk my dog

before bed.

Streets are empty.

Yesterday's exhaust

hangs in the air.

Everyone stays home

at times like this.

Insects sound

on main street.

Day by Day

Day by day I run into, oh,
maybe a zillion facts.
Most of them I don't know what to do with
and let them fall by the way
but a couple I deal with
and these are like sunshine and starlight.

After the Evening Shower I Take Homer
on a Walk to the Top of Dix Hill

Shivering trees
drap
veils of water.
The sky flushes
in the westering sun.
In the east
gray skies
crack blue.

Spendthriftly

What to say?

Warm, the day is bearable.

White clouds scarcely move.

The sky is blue.

Sunlight is bright on the leaves of trees
which is the shade are green and brown.

Among the branches birds chatter, squirrels squawk.

The rising breeze

keeps my forehead dry

and runs off with my exhaled CO₂.

That's okay by me—I didn't want to keep it...

Some of it is wafted

through my pecan tree

who inhales it.

There

a set of cells

containing chlorophyll

makes a trade: hydrogen and oxygen for oxygen and carbon.

Later is manufactured

starch and sugar

with the carbon, lately of my body.

Oxygen and water: these the tree passes

back to the breeze...

from Evers to Tinkers to Chance

we breathe together.

Squirrels and birds squawk and chatter.

The shadows are long in the late afternoon.

... And Maybe a Theory or Two

I have never
in all my many years
met a fact
that would hurt anything
except an explanation.

Given the Obvious Differences, That Is

Sometimes

when I walk into the kitchen
Randall comes to me along the floor
(his eyes alive) and
knotting his small hands in my pants
pulls himself erect between my legs
and stands there looking up into my face.
Then I'm sure I understand
the feeling of the corn and fence
embraced by squash and beans and morning glories.

Just Pushing

I am amazed
sometimes
to see
how small
the turd
from so much
pushing.

Just As Well

It's dinner time.
We move the chair from the kitchen
and the fan from the office.
The placemats look nice
against the wood
and the silver shines
beside the plates.
We sit and eat,
talking between chewing.
By the time we have finished
the light has faded
and it's hard to see.

Just as well;
the silver is clotted with bits of food
or smeared with greases,
the glasses show our fingerprints,
the plates have lost their sheen.
In the coffee cups
tiny pools begin the business
of becoming stains.

Just Another Birthday Party

I am thirty
but it is Randall's first birthday celebration.
That he can share our pleasure
we light and cut the cake
this afternoon.
The little candles won't light
and a little breeze puffs out
the few that do.
In the end we get it lighted;
it is a wonderful dancing
on the cake that meets his eyes
and a wonderful light in his eyes
that meets the dancing.

O Randall!
The world,
isn't it marvelous?

On the Occasion of his Thirtieth Birthday

It was a pretty day
but after the cake and candles
and the opening of presents
—the careful dinner—
he went
in the cool of the evening
out to the porch
with a cigarette
alone
to seriously reflect
the impossible reality
of thirty years existence.

Cicadas and crickets
cried for attention.
Shadows of trees
wanted looking into.
Suddenly: the full moon rose!

Got Up This Morning

I get up
each morning
(not)
just to see
if the world has made it
one
more
time
around.

Ambition

Ambitious

I imagine

ever more elaborate poetic projects

to put into effect

whenever I manage

these few lines.

Impressed

I have always been impressed
by the fat pages
with small print
devoted to the work
of Wordsworth or Dryden.
How in the name
of all that is holy
did they manage
to write so many lines?

Not like this
I guarantee.

Genus Helianthus

Daily their faces follow the sun,
through the years they migrate,
their scattered seed
wandering across America—
along its roads, across its fields—
begetting—how many? —photosynthetic suns.
How am I with my vaunted feet
who every day
walks to school with the sun at his back
and comes home with the sun at his back
and carries the seed of his parents across America
more mobile than these deeprooted weeds?

Waiting I

Sharon calls from school:

"I have a letter I think you've been waiting for."

It's from Alfred A. Knopf.

Impatiently I tell her to open it

and read it over the phone.

It's an acceptance letter!

They'll publish my poems!

I am so delighted I can hardly contain myself,

but because it's a surprise for Ingrid

I chortle instead of crow

and hang up gently.

So vainly I rehearse the scene,

while washing dishes,

waiting for a letter

that will never come.

School I

Another year,
new faces in the halls.
Favorite ones,
vanished with summer,
are sought in vain.
They will not return
except, for a day,
to visit,
changed beyond recognition.

School II

The bickering
starts
before the first day of classes,
aimless factions
clawing each other
for practice.
Painful voices
burn
like a long scratch
festering...

This is how
I make
our living.

School III

I find it hard
to restrain my anger
among the perversities
of spirit
that pass here for intelligence.

Fat of the Land

It is amazing here.
Everywhere grow things to eat.
This afternoon we are after
black walnuts high on Dix Hill.
Randall crawls in the grass
while we stuff our satchel
with green globes that smell of pine and lemon.
In the background, underneath the sounds
of wind and passing cars and sunlight,
we hear the cries
of the inmates of this asylum for the mentally insane,
repetitive wails,
difficult to locate
in the complex of buildings.
Under the pecan tree beside us
Homer is snuffling
a dead bluebird.
Soon the maggots will get to work
recycling the body
but now it lies flamming
in the low light of the setting sun.

"Where did you go?" "Out" "What did you do?" "Grow"

Saplings
like kids
do not grow too well
in the shadows of their parents
who
however loving
screen the light.

To avoid this problem
the pecan tree
exerts great energy
to grow
a zillion times a zillion nuts
for its friends the squirrels to run off with and plant
out beyond the parental perimeter,
out from under its umbrella,
anywhere
except beneath a beech.
This makes the squirrel
more than resident—
integrally tree,
perhaps not woody,
but part
certainly
of the great
shade-making
process.

School IV

Ears ringing with the day's invective
at this institution founded in fraud
I trudge home along the tracks
toward a black sky wreathed in gray
my heart a clenched fist in my chest

Not Quite Onan's Auto Shop

Chattering squirrels
jittering
in pecan branches:
tickle its nuts!

San Lorenzo

In fall the grasses
stand in places
taller than I.

Many of them have stored the summer
in their stems as sugar.

These I chew
littering my walks with masticated stalks
like Zinacantecos
their sugar cane
at San Lorenzo.

The Nature of Pretense

I could, pretentiously,
call them ideas;
more honestly,
observations.

Suzy B.

She will come into my office
and sit across from me.
We will talk
and she will cry.
I'll say something comforting,
inane,
and she'll laugh
with a round mouth
through her tears.
She'll compose herself
like a salad
and go on
as if nothing happened.

Balm

On my way home
I look forward
to the mail.

Maybe Tom,
or Toco,
will have written.

How It Is

Like fat moons
the plates ride their sky of cloth
where the silver dances like stars.
Its sound on the porcelain
is a soft rain
of horses hooves on cobblestones in a morning fog.
After dinner we bathe them like small children
and put them to sleep in the cupboards
until breakfast.

I want to say how it is with dishes;
this is how I manage.

Sappho Wrote This

A
dripping
dishcloth.

Pain

My neck and back
are killing me.

When will I learn
to roll with the sneeze?

The Same Old Song (It's The)

In the middle of the city
the kudzu and the oaks
have shared this piece of ground
with few people
since Homer and I
leary of ticks
stopped coming here two times a day.
Now that the unbearable heat has ceased
a fluorescence of cheap wine bottles
and rumpled newspapers
traces the presence of a few hobos.
Where the sun
runs along the edges of this green
spots of blue and yellow jitter
where the kudzu flowers
and the helianthus tracks the sun.
Half my log's survived
the busy catabolism of the summer
though
even as I sit here
it is crumbling at the farther end
where a zillion organisms
carry on.
— flashing light,
a bird
falls into flight.

Heirspoons

For every purpose a utensil—
standard the knife and fork and spoon
for ordinary meals,
but on occasion
we are known to use
gigantic soup spoons
each engraved
with the name of those
who years ago
gave it to Ingrid's mother's parents
on their wedding.

So we consume our history
with our meal.

Itchy Scratchy

The heat that drove us
itchy sweaty mad all August
this week politely faded.
Last night was cold.
Randall woke twice crying,
Ingrid shivered, sleeping fitfully,
and I woke with my knees to my chest
hugging myself for warmth.

Jostling in the Wind

The wind that tousles Randall's hair
jostles anther and stigma
in the pecan tree.

Bees help too

I'm sure

and rain...

All those catkins in the air,
all that pollen on the breeze—
handfuls, branchloads
scattered.

Everywhere.

The ripened ovary, suntanned brown,
falls fat with seed
smack at my feet.

I pick it up

and run fingers over shell;

its veins and arteries make a pretty pattern,

the woodenness of wind and rain and sun and water,

of squirrel chatter and bird spatter,

a pretty pattern

in wood

of the world.

I crack it under foot

and pop the meat into my mouth.

The Long Story of a Changing Set of Values

In the summer
the water
cold in the sink
was cooling
but already
I find it cold
and impatiently wait
for the hot
to gush from the tap.

Nutting

At first I had to look for them.
Gravity or vegetal will—I cannot say—
pushed or pulled or led them down
beneath the growing leaf mold,
under the mounded compost,
into the mud beside the alley.
My untrained eyes were useless,
but the thin soles on my worn-out shoes
gave away the pecans' presence.
Soon my hands, not guided by my eyes,
could find their hiding places
in the debris of autumn—
automatically—
my fingers brushed and flitted
tuned to the slightest variation
in the pecans' song.
They became birds growing out of my arms
intendent on their own...

Only later did my eyes join in—
after many weeks—
at a glint of hardness in the piled leaves,
a tonal difference in the sweep of dirt,
a spot of shade upon the road
not cast by anything.

Lightly

These days in school
I notice my hand
moving lightly
like a dog's nose snuffling food
the fingers
barely making contact
like a blind man's reading braille.

I'm just looking for pecans
and my hands
can't wait
to get home.

Where's Ingrid? Where's Denis?

It has not been a good week.
I am bored with my classes
and tired of preparing for them all weekend.
Students make the same errors this year
as last, and ask the same questions.
Only the faces are different.
The faculty make political gossip
in the corridors endlessly.
All complain; none act.
They make me sick.
Only the rocks and weeds keep my interest,
they, my son and wife and dog.
In the evenings after Randall's bath
I hide and in Ingrid's arms Randall looks for me,
and then in mine he looks for her.
Very excited
he bites me in the shoulder
and kicks his feet against my chest.
After his bed I play
Mozart divertimenti
till we eat...

Maybe tomorrow will be all day
more like this evening.
But I doubt it...

In This World Together

This morning the wind is strong
in my trashy field. Sunlight
rolls across the kudzu waves
like searchlights in the night
and the trees sound like
the opening of doors
on automobiles.

Heatwave

I want to write
about the daily things

but don't know how.

Tuesday Morning

On the sidewalk before the house
acorns fall like hail;
birds flit
between branch and lamppost.
The early morning traffic
is light and varied.
Cars and plumbers' vans
zip by;
tractor-trailers
crawl.
All are busy on the world's affairs
while I
sit and wait
for the postman's coming.

King of the Golden City

We make so light of the motions of leaves,
so much of the motions of men,
busy rushing here and there on errands of the world.
The wind moves the leaves
and this satisfies us.

Children
who ask the names
of the winds of men
we shush or reprimand
trusting silence
to hide the magnitude
of our presumption.

Gibraltar May Tumble

We act as if
hills and mountains
are forever.
In Mongolia
mountains collapse
and hills are easily moved.
Magicians
do this every day
at breakfast.
One must be

very careful.
We too,
with bulldozers
and busy streams.

On Hearing News of My Good Friend Tom

All night long I have listened to cicadas
and watched the starlight shatter on the windows,
thinking of you across a continent of mountains.
I cannot fill your request in this southern land
to which I am exiled in my eagerness for fame.
No one reads here; books are unknown.
The only words of interest come from children
untutored in the banal ways of this insipid country.

Worrying for Your Imminent Fall

The windblown grass flashes in the sunlight.
When the noise of passing traffic ceases,
its crystal music can be heard above the sighs
of southern pines communing with the wind.
One pass of the lawnmower's whirling blades
puts an end to all this pomp and show,
and I think of you, nursing your pride,
when those around you learn how much you know.

O Christbaum!

You come downstairs in the middle of the night
mindless of the time of year
and its bulk in the dark
is enough to make your heart ache.

Again and Again

He has left me once again.

I can't blame him.

The pile of sticks I had gathered to throw him

sits at my feet,

a pyre for my egotism.

Tomorrow I'll leave pen and paper home

and throw him sticks

til his tongue

trails along the ground between his feet.

Hot Enough

The phone rings.
After half an hour's interruption
I return to my cup of tea
which still holds
a little warmth.

Once Upon a Time

One day an explanation met a fact
coming down the street.

Not having, like most of its kind,
too much intercourse with facts
the explanation was very polite
but the fact would have none of it
and knocked the explanation flat.

Conservatively Speaking

Your average everyday explanation
is a specimen of sissified nonsense
that would benefit greatly from a day or two
spent out in the hurly-burly of the world
even jostling in the streets never mind
your men and mountains.

Waiting II

Some nights after the light is out
and we have said goodnight
and settled in our pillows
I see myself a famous poet
sitting there at Johnny Carson's right,
babbling on about life and love.
The audience loves me, is refreshed
by my openness and sincerity
and loudly demands my frequent return.

By now I realize
that I've embarked
on a very long story that will keep me awake
and unwilling
I yank my thoughts into other channels
and fall asleep

Which Is Why They All Have Pneumonia

They wear their theories like cheap raincoats
out into the weather of facts.
For a while they manage to stay dry
but they end up
not only soaked but carting around
all that freezing water.

Too Frankly Friendly

When sometimes Randall
is too frankly friendly
Homer snaps at him
as at an insect
but blood today he draws
a quarter of an inch
above the blue in Randall's eye
and the living fear in Ingrid's eyes
finds death in mine.

The single stitch
on Randall's forehead
will never close
the wounds it opened

O Meister

It is Sunday.

Appropriately I sit on the porch
listening to Jesu, Der Du Meine Seele.

"Ach höre, ach höre, ach höre."

Down the block someone whistles
and a dog curled in the sun
rises and trots out of sight.

Surrender

I do not, any longer,
stay up late at night,
but tonight was peculiar
and it was past midnight
when I left the meeting
on curriculum revision
and found myself
away from the city lights
on the railway tracks heading home.

The fat stars
hung quivering in the sky
as if from strings
and I thought of Van Gogh and Krazy Kat—
shorthand thinking
for a man in a hurry.
No time to deal
with these stars myself
I rushed the experience
into another...
Thinking this I stopped.

I thought of surrendering to this moment,
staying out to look at the stars,
but I had at home a wife,
sleeping lightly against my coming,
and a dog, impatient for his walk.
"Van Gogh," I said
as I plunged homeward
hands in pockets
along the tracks.

Though Closely Watched

It seemed better.
For a while they got along,
kid and dog,
outside beneath the bitter blue
of hot-house January.
The only scars
were one on Randall's forehead,
one on Ingrid's mind.
Today
blood ran again on Randall's cheek
who not caring wanted still
to play with Homer
who not caring still did not
and that was that.

For a second it was hard to breathe
then gulping air
I felt the blood
moving in my body.

Adios, Chiquito

I had thought
it would be easier
to say goodbye
to my fine dog
but the room
suddenly was hot
my eyes wet
my throat dry.
I buried my face
in the rough hairs of his neck
and placed my lips upon his forehead:
"Adios, chiquito."

For the last time
I leashed him
for the last time
I walked him
down the corridor between the pens
into the cage
where he will wait for me
wait for me to come
as I always have
to take him home
to take him home
to his place beside our bed
and the many walks
morning, afternoon and evening
that we shall take no more.

How long will he wait?
How many times will he stand
at the sound of the door
at the end of the hall
and press his nose
against the wire mesh,
looking for me to take him home?
How long will he wait for me
to scratch his stomach
to throw him sticks
to hold his head between my legs
to run with him
through the long green shadows?
How long will he wait for me
to call his name,
to calm
his beating heart?

Understanding

It is Saturday afternoon
in Boston.

There are many things
that might be done.

But everywhere
I see people walking dogs
and I can only think,
"I too did that once."

Homer Homer Homer

Flat on the ground Homer
the sun on the damp of your nose Homer
your teeth so good at tearing sticks Homer
your ears Homer like airplane wings
your Homer straight up tail
Homer your soft paws your tough nails
your feet pattering your nails in the hallway clicking Homer
your sighs Homer your chuffs
your tongue translucent in the sun Homer
your pupils Homer impenetrably black
your tags jingling Homer on your harness

How long Homer will you wait for us?

The edge of light where the sun gleams in your hair Homer
your silhouette burning brightly at the edge

Homer Homer Homer

Perversion

I've developed
an interest
in the dog feces
peppering
downtown Boston,
signs
of those
who managed
better than I.

Here and There

I was jealous
that Ingrid stayed at home,
while I deserted Homer,
but Sunday night
when I returned
I saw her eyes
and the way
we carefully avoided
talking much
about the only thing we
thought of.

... and no bread with one meatball

After several years and untold dollars

I know little more about the maps in peoples' heads
than when I started.

Despite our knowledge, jails are more crowded than ever;

despite our paradigms and models, wars are constant in these years of "peace".

Universal literacy has not meant happiness,

parks have not meant health.

Every decade the census figures cause surprise,

and predictions fall always wide of the mark.

We dignify our mysteries with the name of science

and -ology attach to any word.

Goodman was right;

there are few potatoes in the fields I plow.

Nutty Kid

Randall is a pecan nut
loving the cracking like the eating.
Two or three at a time—filling his hands—
he brings me to crack
beneath my shoe or chair.
With my fingernails
I pry apart the exocarp
revealing the seed
and its crazy convolutions,
its four lobes
symmetrically disposed...
Wiggling it gently from the shell
I can extract it whole and split it,
half for Randall, half for me.
A wall the red of iron
cuts in half
the cavity remaining:
the two small chambers
are like cedar closets or the insides
of boxes
of very good cigars.
But Randall is impatient.
I crush the shell between my fingers
and sweep the debris off the porch
into the garden.

The Doorbell Rings

The doorbell rings.
I am startled by its lovely sound,
two well-rounded tones
I seldom heard
when we had Homer.
At the sound
of a footstep on the porch
he would rush
barking
for the door
and we would leap
cursing
from our seats
sloshing tea
across our cuffs.

"Homer! Homer!
That's enough!" we'd cry
but today
I cry
for the dog that isn't hearing
these soft sounds
and running crazy
toward the door.

Big Teeth Would Help

Busily they read and read
looking for the facts
they'd find
if only they weren't encased
in that coffin of an explanation.

Heartless

These days
the only thing I see
when I am in the kitchen
is the red plastic waterbowl
that isn't there.

The Market

Sometimes

I go with Randall and Ingrid
to the city market.

We park his stroller
beside a garbage can
and he plays with the handle.

The man at the fruit stand
always gives him an apple.

At Claribelle's

we buy greens and bacon;
a dollar buys an armful
of collards or kale
and a handful
of fat and lean
streaked like the strata
beneath the pavement.

Walking home

we rip the skin off Randall's apple
and watch the juices run at his mouth
where his teeth cleave the meat.

We wave at the engineer
of a passing train,
and reach home—hungrily—
in time for lunch.

At Night

It's dark
when I'm awakened
by the need to pee.
Quietly
I draw my legs
between the sheets
and careful
not to step on Homer
find my feet
beside the bed.
But in this lonely house
no dog
any longer
breaks the silence
with his chuffs and sighs.

Hungrily
I listen
to the sounds of water
rushing
in the toilet.

How I Beat Kevin at Chess

The jay that effortlessly
flies a thousand feet
struggles to reach
the branch above its head.

Fecundity Fecundity

Gently
the pecan moves
in spring breezes
and rains;
self-inseminant fucker
screwing itself in the wind!

Dusty Spring Field

Robert Giles calls me
rude and arrogant.
I don't care

but I do.
I come home along the tracks
picking larkspurs and lillies for my wife.
They taste dusty where scissorsless
I bite the stem
and my hands are dirty from handling them.
Pure yellow, cream and blue
they leap and sing
despite the railroad's filth and grime
and I
in the filth of this my only world
determine
like a weed to thrive.

Dirty Plates

The plates
that Homer used to lick
between the dinner and the salad
now go dirty
into the water.

When will the recognition of his absence
cease?
Where was he not
part of our lives?

I Wander as I Wonder

From the porch
where I smoke
my postprandial cigarette
I see a sky
clotted with stars.
An occasional car
whizzes by.
I wonder
about the political organization
of my body,
how my four trillion cells
decide to apportion
the available
oxygen.

Breathing deeply
we move inside
together.

I Hope They Had Some Life Insurance

Too many of your socalled facts
are like garden flowers snapped off their stems
bereft of leaves and sod and weeds.

No wonder they all wilt.

They need a noxious insect or two
to keep them on their toes
and some real wind and rain.

Now your real facts —
they're out there in those fields
dancing like weeds.

It Really Really Is

With a rush of dark we lift
and fly west
just north of the George Washington Bridge,
looped like spider spittle
across the lordly Hudson.
My wing to the ground
we steeply bank above the Palisades
and slowly south along the city,
motionless, immense and flat.
New York lies out the window, all five boroughs,
bright in sodium vapor daytimes,
at night and at this distance yellow webs,
rectilinear below, radiant beyond,
where city and country darkness mingle.
There the darkness of the Park,
there the brilliance of the midtown towers—
golden—even in the white of the fat full moon,
beating on the waters
of river, bay and channel
as if upon the zillion backs of tethered butterflies.
The pilot, moved to words, points out what lies below,
strait by strait, bridge by bridge.
"It's really beautiful isn't it," he says.
So in America we fly home
from work.

None at Tea

Erik cannot
sit here to tea—
I have the volume
turned too high already
and even so
the caterwaul of trucks
and cars
beyond my window
lets me catch
just a note
or two.

Afterwards

After a rain
the summer after noon light
is bright and flat and white.
In the evening
no yellow
no pink.

Amounting to about one part in eight billion more or less...

Very hot I go outside
to sit in the shade of the pecan tree.
It is not a deep beech shade
but the sun does not reach me here
stopped by leaves
photosynthetically busy
absorbing photons.
These have traveled from the sun
ninety-three million miles
and then some.
Marvelous how it matters to me
that they end this endless journey
sixty feet above my head...
sixty feet in all those many miles.

Long Since Gone

Down the street
a car pulls over...
some minor problem.
I turn to watch
and catch
snatches of a popular song
sifting through the windows.
Turning
to my book
I hum along,
stumble,
and am corrected
by the music from a car
long since gone.

Washing Dishes

While I wash the dishes
evening becomes
outside the windows above the sink.
Trees grow dim.
As the light lessens
the flowers
of the mock orange tree
begin to glow
and soon I see only
white flowers in the darkness.

Looking up
from soaping the salad bowl
I see myself in the sudden mirror.
I am stunned by my beauty.
I admire me,
the way the blue and white
hobnail towel
folds down my shoulder,
the way the light
points up
the curls in my hair.

Captivated by a curl
I come to understand
that I'm looking at
the silhouette
of the mock orange tree
cast on the window
by the street lights.
My thoughts turn gaudy.
I drop my eyes to the salad bowl
where the soap is swirled
foam on brown.

And this I rinse
beneath
the running water.

Ah, Rene!

Against the cloud wall in the south
a bird is poised in silhouette
one wing to the zenith
the other to the ground.
Coming out of the turn
its head appears and then the flat of its wings
still motionless
a hole in the mass of cloud.

Anticipation

It's been dry this spring
but soon
the rains must come again.

Someday soon
I'll get out the ladder
and make sure
the gutters
aren't completely filled
with last year's leaves.

