

IF THERE IS ANOTHER WORLD

If there is another world,
I think you can take a cab there—
or ride your old bicycle
down Junction Blvd.
past the Paris Suites Hotel
with the Eiffel Tower on the roof
and past the blooming Magnolia and on—
to the corner of 168th Street.
And if you're inclined to,
you can turn left there
and yield to the blind
as the sign urges us—
especially since it is a state law.
Especially since there is a kind of moth
here on the earth
that feeds only on the tears of horses.
Sooner or later we will all cry
from inside our hearts.
Sooner or later even the concrete
will crumble and cry in silence
along with all the lost road signs.
Two days ago 300 televisions
washed up on a beach in Shiomachi, Japan,
after having fallen off a ship in a storm.
They looked like so many
oversized horseshoe crabs
with their screens turned down to the sand.
And if you're inclined to, you can continue
in the weightless seesaw of the light

through a few more intersections
where people inside their cars
pass you by in space
and where you pass by them,
each car another thought—only heavier.

ALOFT

I drove East Genesee Street to West Genesee Street
while the sun was setting—the cold winter sun
slowly withdrawing from the walls
of black snow.

I was not driving anywhere in particular, just driving—
and I remembered what Sam once said
about never having been on his way anywhere,
but simply on his way.

And I thought of a dream I'd had
in which I dreamt that I was dreaming—
in which I was also driving
past stolen goods: TVs and stereo equipment
left on the side of the expressway exit ramp
to kiss the immaterial in the night.

Once, years ago, I was suddenly lost
below a huge overcast sky and driving past rows
of anonymous houses
some still with their long leftover Christmas lights
and identical white mailboxes—
and in passing, I glimpsed
a man running up his driveway with two garbage cans
—one in each hand—

He wore a black pinstriped suit.

The garbage cans were his wings, his galvanized steel wings.

HAPPINESS

How far away is your happiness?

How many inches?

How many yards?

How many bus rides to work
and back?

How many doorways
and stairwells?

How many hours
awake in the dark

belly of the night
which contains

all the world's bedrooms,
all dollhouse-sized?

How far away is your happiness?

How many words?

How many thoughts?

How much pavement?

How much thread
in the enormous sewing machine
of the present moment?

MATTER

Tonight, because all matter crumbles, your father sits drunker than usual in the red armchair. His back is to the window, level with the yellow sheen of the street lamp that falls on his left shoulder and down across his chest. From the other side of the living room, he is an icon in a white undershirt. Now he applies his concentration to balancing the highball on the armrest. Successful, he looks up exalted and tells you how you must carry the tables and chairs, the beds and bookcases, everything you own out into the yard and burn it.

A STORY

The swallows have a story
they tell no one,
not even the rats,
the rats you once saw standing
on their hind legs
at the dump
late in the dark,
the car silent.
Not even the empty shopping cart
of the wind
as it wheels through the foliage—
Everyone has a story,
like a string of invisible Christmas lights
wound into the heart.
And every story has a story
that hides inside its own labyrinth.
The past has a story
as wide and as deep as the world.
Every word has a story
and every stone.

BECOMING A COAT

What will become of us?

Besides coats, besides shoes
on a rack

in the Salvation Army Thrift Store.

What will become of us

after our eyes
have gone up in smoke

carrying our visions?

Do you have a vision?

What rooms do you hold
within the confines
of your skull?

What do you wish
your own children
to become? Dentists

or trapeze
artists? What will become of us?

Besides coats, besides shoes
that will continue to walk
a while longer
upon the earth.