

ATOM

It is sixty-five years since Hiroshima,
they write. Should one cup a handful of water from a river,
there is certainly in it at least one atom of oxygen
that Cleopatra exhaled, I have read,
or was it Marilyn?
I hear my daughter's sobbing
through the wall, in whose marlstone joints
still trembles a tear of builder's sweat.
The house is secreting saliva from the bedrock.
When she struggled her way into the world,
I paced the room.
Had she been given a gift
of one atom from Hiroshima?

BUZZARD

I had taken him to his mother
and was returning along the D8.
In the emergency lane several cars, and behind them
scattered papers like a snail's trail.
I thought about how many things
it is possible to learn: to speak again, to use your legs
instead of your hands, to let yourself, like a newt,
grow joy inside your body,
tissue to tissue, joyfully linked cells.
Like a table cleared with a sleeve, the empty highway
signaled that the healing time
would be written with a tiny pinkish scar
into the calendar of memory.

And then—I saw it out of the corner of my eye,
like someone indicating an attack
and a shadow passed perilously
like a startled doe—
a falling buzzard, rotating, like when a plane's engine
cuts out, and then crashes
into the azure highway
somewhere far behind the car.
I imagine that disheveled remnant,
collapsed into itself upon the merciless surface,
as if it still didn't know how to fly,

chilled in her meager nest
and she watched that blue above her,
predatory head adamantly lodged
between two wings whose tips
are ruffled by the breeze like a promise . . .
I watch behind me as her bird body
calms in quivers, the wind ruffling her again
as it slowly dissolves
like sleep.

GRAVITATION

They're having a picnic, but it looks as
if they were taking the tools out of the car in an emergency,
or they are taking the tools out of the car,
but it looks as if they were going out on a picnic.
A body does not thrust itself against the floor of an elevator,
but the elevator against the body.
Dusk does not fall upon the city,
the city slides creeping in beneath the dusk.
A hawk does not propel itself toward a mouse,
the mouse catapults itself against the predator.
At the opposite bank a barge rolls the river under itself.
We are not approaching our end,
but from ultimate emptiness
the end is hurtling toward us.