

## Seared Lungs

Healing. Taste the danger,  
& hope. Oh fireman, with fear  
feeding adrenaline  
how on earth do you keep  
going back? Is duty instinctive?  
Is it anger, courage, love?

To salvage whatever may breathe  
from things minutely charring...  
to take an axe or use just hands  
& funnel through...  
Glass popping like candy, wiring,  
exploding tentacles, the retardant  
suits quivering, ovens in themselves...

This is grace, amazing for existing  
within carnage.  
This is passion, humanity attempting  
to preserve in a one in one thousand chance.  
This is our business here, the urgency which  
crawls, prowls, smolders to shield-----

Recovery, even calm, afterwards, always  
a hose, loaded, thick & ready in the face  
of loss & its consequences:

to survive when others do not.

## The Tattoos

They put on you  
I found to be astonishing & slightly  
grotesque. No, not the fact of your skin,  
perfect if hurting beneath that modern Aztec map,  
but the lines, the x's, a technologic blueprint  
of voodoo for where the radiation would enter  
the numb branches...

Perhaps warriors are painted as such, & certainly  
you have, even when delirious,  
pure soul. Yet I also see the marks as brands  
before slaughter, as hands of the pilot steering  
across the radar & the sonar screen  
as if the scene was just a video game, & those  
were play toys, those bombs that he drops...

Let the beams pinpointing you penetrate gently,  
excise the poison & not nullify anything else.  
May you walk from the incisors leaf tossed  
as though from the prickling wind which frees  
the stem from the limb.

Back to turf again, to terra firma, to what is  
solvent, the majestic tattoos of earth  
we are each particular needles & ink of,  
we scrolls in our own right  
of the fold, the strolling

lambs.

(for Anna S.)

## Summers

Morning muffins, the sun striking tins  
dull amid that sweet warm vapor as the radio,  
the locusts hummed &, into mugginess,  
I was borne adrift, loosened here & there by field breezes  
plus one wade-able creek...

Mud becoming clay, a heron downstream,  
suddenly some launched gawky pterodactyl  
small against blotter-blue leaking like a page  
upon brambles, thistle stalks, those growing  
over woods...

Also  
there were  
paths: the old railroad ties beyond corn tassels  
the milkweed silk——paths remembering cows,  
rabbits, rock fences, a grove of headstones...

Charcoal rubbings, finding the initials,  
all brought back, spilled on the picnic table  
with pockets of feathers, butterfly wings,  
souvenirs marveled to gulps of ice tea,  
that cool magnification. Poetic tension:  
No, I wasn't  
sad yet, given  
to some sulky  
indulgence or a planet to escape from.  
Instead, each  
day was the Potomac  
or an almost boat-less lake having  
ferried off naval sails, soldiers bodies  
into the forget of museum statues.

Furthermore  
there were touches, giggles of lightning bugs  
zipping out of jars & running seemed effortless

since flesh wasn't for conquering, love, recreation.  
Again, recollecting, I strip, dance on innocence here,  
metropolitan-docked, while traffic backfires,  
construction drills & I slip, feel your warmth,  
its muffin sun of musky gliding so valiantly nude  
in that fertile grass, that summer Aegean, that fur fur depot.