

## **JACKSONVILLE, VERMONT**

Because I am not married, I have the skin of an orange

that has spent its life in the dark.

Inside the orange I am blind.

I cannot tell when a hand reaches in and breaks

the atoms of the blood. Sometimes

a blackbird will bring the wind into my hair.

Or the yellow clouds falling on the cold floor

are animals beginning to fight each other

out of their drifting misery. All the women I have known

have been ruined by fog and the deer crossing the field at night

## THE VISIT

My only mother, who lost sixty pounds, tried to stand up in the bathroom  
and fell backwards on the white linoleum floor in the first hour of the morning  
and was carried to the bed in the nurse's arms and then abruptly  
opened her eyes, later, the room dark, and twisted the needles in her arms  
and talked to her dead friend, Rosie, and heard the doorbell ring  
as though in the kitchen in the old place deciding if she should answer,  
rubbing the circle on her finger where the wedding ring once was  
while slipping downward on the sheets like a body without limbs and I slid  
my good arms beneath her arm-pits and pulled her bony body up  
against the two thin pillows. And then, when she was asleep again,  
I walked down the hallway's arc of yellow light, ghosts hovering  
on either side of the doors of rooms where the strange sickness  
of being alive was the last thing between dreaming and eternity  
which closes like the ocean closes over the blue-starry body  
and does not stop, and I understood again that we never come back,  
and upright, with everything that takes its life seriously, I returned to my mother.

## **BECAUSE THE TREES**

Because the trees stand like the conductors

Of the dark, I press my ear against the night

As if it were the stomach of a woman

Who will one day be my wife.

Whose crickets are those ringing like cow-bells?

Whose hands are those holding the birds

By the ends of their wings?

The grasses sway in the wind like the hair

Of men singing to women they will never

Get close to. The moon is a sinking ship

In its last hour. When the drowning sailors call

To be saved, I don't lie.

I pull the white string and watch the curtain

Of stars sink into the ocean, catching fire