

OXYGEN CATASTROPHE

Mon vieux, you say cremation,
you can't help feeling, is a gesture
ungrateful to the body
and the giver of the body.

But I (who have for years at a time
lived, reclined, frolicked, pranked, played the fool
in low, unworthy rooms, far too full
of gratefulness, of a kind, for my body) wonder:

do you mean the same dear giver
of the sweet sweet air
that is already burning
your body, mine, our memory, my memory of

a black and white collie in the spring,
the spring,
the seraphim,
these letters,

everything?

**ON LEARNING THAT THE PHONE IN A HOUSE WHERE HE LIVED THIRTY
YEARS AGO IS STILL IN HIS NAME**

If I could I call him to the phone
who lived there then,
maybe interrupting those lovemakings
that almost broke the green chair
(with, among others, the pianist
whose slender hands had Mozart in them,
and went cold as young),

it would only be to warn: go ahead,
move to the city again, let yourself
charge down the same strait
between clashing rocks, between those
burning voids and frozen viral graves.

Because, Patrick –
if you try to hunger or love more carefully
no one from the future will breathe your name,

and you will still die –

stupid, hungry, without
having burned the dross off your blood.

CRADLE-SONG

When I signed for her ashes

I received her, as once
 she received me
into her lyric hold
 and let me ride anchor there,
smaller than the letter *alif*.

They gave her into my hands,
 seven pounds, two ounces,
as once they had given
 me into her hands.

I set her on the hearth shrine,
 as she set me once a place at her table,
among her other needy charities.

After nine months I scattered her
 back to that cold, delphine Atlantic of hers,
to tidal squalls that rip
 and sigh their salt across the rocks,

as once she let me fall

unready
 onto this world's
gasping, shouting, love-stained shore.