

## THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT AMERICA

From a car, through a world that's turned to corn, red barns,  
huge machinery, and a church that says, "Read the Bible, it will  
scare the hell out of you!"

From the banks of the Iowa River, where a snake comes out  
of the grass like a belt, testing the air with its buckle-tongue  
From the Mark Twain Diner with a Mark Twain Burger  
and a Mark Twain cup of tea

From another car, Chicago's stickleback in the rearview and  
the Lake's blue lung swollen with fishing boats

From space, as in the installation by Aaron Koblin in the Museum  
of Modern Art that shows air traffic over the United States as  
colored lights, a slow firework spraying in and out during the day,  
careful and beautiful

From a tour boat in Chicago, where the not-half-decent docent  
tells us that this building has one hundred and ninety-eight  
floors, including parking, and was designed by, you guessed it,  
Merrill, Owings and Skidmore

From the booth of a bar with a sign that says, "I'm Irish, what's  
your excuse?"

In a nightclub, where you happen upon the Iowa State Drag  
Queen championships, arms outstretched with dollar bills. This  
you did not expect

America is standing in a room with Pocahontas, Worzel Gummidge,  
a bedbug, and at least three Chilean miners. Halloween,  
in New York City at least, is no longer about darkness and all about  
just having fun. Something about this disturbs you

I love the way in America the planes fly so low you can really see  
the fall colors and the cities cut like circuit boards

I love the mechanics and labor of your hand-towel dispensing units.  
That lever does for me again and again

I love that even in the cold the sky is blue, the sun is out, the air is  
crisp and clear

*O, my America, my new found land!* Where the poems are as long  
as the highways, and there is no such thing as a short story