

AFTER WINTER

when we think we have borne
everything, we walk to the park to watch
salmon batter upstream, their lips
spoil over spiked underbites,
shanks ruby-bright with decay. Better
than any of us they understand
that to compose something beautiful,
you must be very hungry. On one side
of the bridge they teem, waiting without
knowing for the man in the dam-house
to open the gate between the river
and the swollen ovary of the Sound.
The grave-hearted among us drop lines
to water. Dogs strain their leashes,
crazy from the smell of meat turning.
Our lovers take our hands and tell us
they are leaving, their fingers
a hot, brittle shell. Later we lie down
in the park with a bottle of booze
and a bottle of medicine. We are young
and are supposed to feel better.
When a neighbor passes on the path,
black hair skull-tight, round glasses
planetary in stuttered street lamps, we turn
toward water. He sees us or he doesn't.
In the starting rain the silvered street
pebbles away into what came before.