

SHOTGUNS

The day after Christmas
Blackbirds lifted like a shadow
Of an oak, slow leaves
Returning to bare branches.
We followed them, a hundred
Small premeditated murders
Clustered in us like happiness.
We had the scent of girls
On our hands & in our mouths,
Moving like jackrabbits from one
Dream to the next. Brandnew
Barrels shone against the day
& stole wintery light
From trees. In the time it took
To run home & grab Daddy's gun,
The other wing-footed boys
Stumbled from the woods.
Johnny Lee was all I heard
A siren in the flesh,
The name of a fallen friend
In their wild throats. Only Joe
Stayed to lift Johnny's head
Out of the ditch, rocking back
& forth. The first thing I did
Was to toss the shotgun
Into a winterberry thicket,
& didn't know I was running
To guide the paramedics into
The dirt-green hush. We sat
In a wordless huddle outside
The operating room, till a red light
Over the door began pulsing
Like a broken vein in a skull.