

the sand backslides and rattles.
I could never learn to distinguish
between the true breast
of the local goddess,
and all the ordinary stones
scattered over the mountain.
And although the woman's eyes
are lifted briefly
from the same deep pool
as my own,
I could never summon the nerve
to walk like that, body bent
into the world's oldest question,
carried up the mountain,
death after death.

INITIATION, 1965

Because a boy must murder something,
because a boy must be implicated,
we were shooting the doves
with a pattern of shot as wide
and heartless as the hand of God,
because one of us would be sent to war
in a country he couldn't find on the map,
because one of us would stay alive
by a series of academic maneuvers,
because one of us would remember
how the wind flapped through the blades
of milo, how we baited the field,
crouched in the dirt of the roadside.

You have to lead a dove, you have
to aim for the next move he makes,
which is a move into nothing,
which is a shattering of iridescent

feathers, a limp body
none of us was hungry for.

Because a little blood on the hands
is good for a boy, a little extra
meanness might save his life,
we were shooting the doves.
The hitch in their flight,
the unpredictable swerving
made it almost seem fair
because we were terrified
of the recoil, and the bruises
kept deepening in the hollows
of our right shoulders
as we shot the doves,
because we drove our father's cars,
because we were our father's sons.
The river was slate-grey, murmured
and lapped into the willows
that marked the state line
that bordered the field
where we were shooting the doves
because a boy must murder something,
because a boy must be implicated.

HOMAGE TO WHITE BREAD, CIRCA 1956

It was called *Bunny Bread* in Kentucky;
from the cellophane, a cartoon rabbit
aimed a smile at my sister and me.

This was before the cult of the body,
before whole wheat, before fiber.
This was bread as white
as the bedsheets tugging at the line,
as white as the soul ascending;