

## HEALING

The girl I love still sleeps with her mother  
who is huge, bulky as a bear.  
It is a small house in Guthrie  
without a doorknob or a father.  
He is silent on a hill. They forget  
to leave flowers on Memorial Day.

We stay up late, kissing in the car,  
windows open to the cricket buzz.  
Inside, her mother barely sleeps.  
Food goes bad in the fridge.  
The worthless brother, guitar  
plugged to the wall, wails.

The boom's gone bust.  
Every other house  
is empty in this neighborhood,  
a democracy of failure.  
Armadillos rustle in the brush.  
We watch the neighbors tune their truck,  
the breasts of a woman they saw  
in a bar last night troubling  
the pure mechanics of their talk.

All day the brother sleeps  
in his leaking waterbed.  
The father, a stern man  
in uniform, watches me  
from the bookshelf.

Her hair is perfectly black  
and smells faintly of her permanent.  
I walk to the drugstore with her  
to buy artificial nails. They leave  
red highways down my spine.

In the sink her dishes grow  
green. The back yard rises  
in a weedy funk, foaming  
over bones of old cars.  
The dog drowns in ticks.

An aunt comes by, ashen-faced.  
This is a laying on of hands.  
Her tumor's growing like a great idea,  
a central concept. Jesus,  
everyone says, their palms  
burning through to the core. Heal.  
A cousin wears Christ  
on a t-shirt: this blood's for you.  
Pepsi's in the fridge.

Soaps in the afternoon, couples  
humping through the broadcast day.  
In the glamor magazines  
scattered on the floor  
women tan and tone.  
They come hard with famous men.  
I suggest we go

for a doorknob at the hardware store.  
Vetoed. Too hot.  
A sister visits, baby  
sucking at her chest.  
She swears her milk  
will shoot across the room.

At dusk we drive to the Sonic,  
a neon bonfire near  
the base's barbed perimeter.  
B-52s tilt over with a black wake.  
Evil, she says, munching okra,  
her face so beautiful  
in the red fire of sunset  
my throat tightens, I could cry.  
A song comes over the radio,  
the very car shimmers, the bulbs  
of the drive-in blooming  
red and blue, deepening  
in the failing light  
and she moves into my arms,  
smelling of soap and french fries.  
All around us  
men and women, boys and girls  
are tuned to the same frequency,  
moving together under the tinted glass,  
beneath the whirlwind of moths  
in the hot air, the Sonic  
throbbing with light and love,  
the life I left to come here  
forgotten and the sun  
sliding down a dome of gold.  
She laughs. Mosquitoes  
rise in the rural haze.  
Her tongue is in my ear.