

## THE ALLIGATORS

Feigning sleep,  
to the casual eye  
more dead than alive,  
they wait. On them,  
like a dinner plate  
forever dropping,  
all things depend.  
One sees it clearly  
in the eyes  
of certain women.  
After a time  
not even their children  
can pull them away.  
I have seen them  
standing tensely there  
as at a window:  
my mother  
my grandmother looking out  
one hand floating absently  
among the dishes,  
and the sink, the sink  
soft-sucking things  
it can't quite swallow.  
I have seen them standing there  
as rigidly as birds  
who feel too late  
the almost imperceptible  
undulation of stagnant water.  
When at last  
they lift their heads  
I've felt the whole zoo listen:  
a neighborhood at dark  
listening to streetcars  
the far factories whistling  
children, a lifetime  
the perfectly indifferent  
closing in.