

RED DUST

This harpie with dry red curls  
talked openly of her husband,  
his impotence, his death, the death  
of her lover, the birth and death  
of her own beauty. She stared  
into the mirror next to  
our table littered with the wreck  
of her appetite and groaned:  
Look what you've done to me!  
as though only that moment  
she'd discovered her own face.  
Look, and she shoved the burden  
of her ruin on the waiter.

I do not believe in sorrow;  
it's not American.  
At 8,000 feet the towns  
of this blond valley smoke  
like the thin pipes of the Chinese,  
and I go higher where the air  
is clean, thin, and the underside  
of light is clearer than the light.  
Above the tree line the pines  
crowd below like moments of the past  
and on above the snow line  
the cold underside of my arm,  
the half in shadow, sweats with fear  
as though it lay along the edge  
of revelation.

And so my mind closes around  
a square oil can crushed on the road  
one morning, startled it was not

the usual cat. If a crow  
had come out of the air to choose  
its entrails could I have laughed?  
If eagles formed now in the  
shocked vegetation of my sight  
would they be friendly? I can hear  
their wings lifting them down, the feathers  
tipped with red dust, that dust which  
even here I taste, having eaten it  
all these years.