3 A.M.: PUT PEDRO TO SLEEP

I know exactly what death looks like

downy hills pale green tufts of cottonwood trees ribbon of road, ribbon of river.

The needle, long and shiny. . . .

Her breath rises and I feel for it. She's small.

During the apneas the little pauses

she might drift as on a hang glider

over that landscape.

I almost pushed him down

the cliff

on Canyon Road on his last day today

I thought about it

Pedro, companion

of my loneliness

my solitary glides, at night, over those hills.

Why do they call it

putting to sleep?

At night

we turn ourselves over to God.

In the spring on the first warm hot days

that force the buds open

force purple-scented lilac from dun-leaved bushes people want

to feel the sun and air again.

They take off their shirts

then,

their heads

with a gun, with. . . .

My baby and I keep our shirts on,

stay on this side.

Pedro scrabbles up the edge

across the stones in rapid water.

Pedro, ball of will

and bites,

wagging his white-tipped tail when he comes to me.

He'll be put to sleep.

At first, his rest will be very dark;

then, wisps of dawn will fill the house;

he'll scratch to be let out

his black and brown tank-shaped body

will trot down the sidewalk

his toenails will click

his collar will jingle

an hour later

he'll return from Smith's

as he does

every morning

from scrounging the dumpster

with a whole roast chicken

a dozen spareribs raw or cooked

a freshly baked loaf of bread still in its cellophane. . . .