The Clouds

rise feathered or choked cumulous
dreams swept from the hurt mind.
I touch the white scar the dragon
on my leg where the cycle burned
and try to sleep. the cars go by all night
reddening the smog lights moving like feathers
across the wall. my wife in a blue robe
melting like a thought. the hazy light
spreads milk along her arms.
when I rise at 2 a.m. my hands go out
against the light and disappear the mirror
is frosted the towels puff from the rack.

II

in Tijuana a bullfighter
with a mutilated hand
rattles a tin cup.
his right eye clouds
on a fifty cent piece
and he whimpers at the legs
of tourists that seem
like flags in the wind.
the wind is not his friend.
it lifts the folds of cloth
dresses coats the veils
where he finds the glossed
eye brighter than water.
he finds the broken cup
of his ear or the bull's ear
stiffening in his own right hand.

III

cloud for my mind opaque
as a castle in the rivers
of air for my fist
until the fingers drift
like snow clouds driven
by the wind above the waters
of the reservoir. Mount Tecate
circled by the arms
of the swan meadow printed
with poppies blue washed rock
in a hanky I found
an eagle feather burnt
from the sun. my voice
dissolving into echoes
into waves of air the lines
of heat burning through
the fog. the boulders seem
like cobbles in a stream
beneath the undertow of clouds.

IV

black angel in the graveyard
at Iowa City each bronze wing
lika a nimbus above the tablets
of snow. the lindens steam.
empty spaces whirlwinds of paper
and soot soiling the snow.
the woman is buried beneath
saplings shining in the ice
no memory of the husband
who disappeared the Polack bar
where she would make it
with anyone. one night
we crossed markers name plates
marble crosses and saw
the statue trembling in the wind
feet shod with damp black leaves
green rust from the eyes
and mouth the bronze features
of the face bitten
by the inexpressible cold
that must have gripped her mind.

V

drunk at 5 P.M.
in the back of Kenny's
you did caligraphy for free beers
until your cheek pulled
like a wet sail into
a puddle of beer. faces
of the brakeman plumber
carpenter spun on a barstool.
italics in a notebook
the red roofs of mouths
are syllables O's trailing
flame in the sandwich sign
above the cooler a comma
like an eyelash. the page
shifts when the door
opens lifts like a wing
or an aimless leaf "white breasts
of eagles turning" the page
is crumpled Glen and I must
carry you home before dark.

VI

my arms and legs drift through
the icy air and the joggers
each with his own motion float past.
We smile through the clouds
of breath my arms stiff and close
to my heart air flooding my veins.

we round the corner of the track
rows of cottonwood bending
with every stride feet sprung
from the grass. the cloud heights
splashed with fire and the loose
formations of geese my legs thrashing
in a bright fog lightning
my eyes fill with rain.

VI

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VII

yellow swords of the lightning
burning through. each splinter
struck in my memory needles of redwood
bluing my thumb. I wait for
the rain that darkens shirts
papers wood through an open window.
the streaked panes reflecting guilt
dissolve or fill with their own cool space.

water cutting ditches in the road
water cutting at the roots
tendrils torn like paper
from the soft dirt. everything loose
everything that is not mine
sucked down into a drain
the whirlpools along the road
plumes of dust from the rafters
studded with iron.

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VIII

the fig tree is spotted with oil
and the trunk is painted white.
I see the bruised tips of the fig
under the raining headlights.
on the windshield in my eyes milk white
seeds that come apart like clouds.
in the ground fog miles away
Fresno burning. my hand
on the wheel cut by light.
the clouds that stream above us
tug at the leaves. cars whirl down
the freeway toward an empty blue
the sudden flaring of the leaves
and the moon that touches everything
pulled by the thin trails of vapor.

IX

clouds on the face of the moon
creosote on my face that rises
like a balloon in the silver
of mirrors. my gloves burn
in the dark heat and my temples
where I wiped away the sweat
are marked with halfmoons
of skin. clouds of skin fall
flakes of my dust
and I know that rivers
of thought will drain
from these burned features.
I wait for three sudden blows
of light reddened shafts like nails
that promise the sun. there will
be sunflowers a green banner
and our bones moving like dice
will not part the white robe
blazing behind every detail.