

## Silent Scars

Black Flint Hills covered with an early autumn  
snow were lit more from the ground than the  
sky until the hill crests dawned like so many  
kerosene lanterns flickering from kitchen windows.  
Not far from town a towering white pine  
forever headed southeast, its brown bark  
serrated with black lines. To lie under it  
on a summer's day  
gave good luck to a new marriage.  
Under a stormy sky  
it assaulted the soul,  
crept deep through the veins of even a foetus.

Doors locked, safe in my car, 67 mph,  
I listened to Mailer's *Kindertotenlieder*.  
I passed skeletons of tree stands  
in water to their first limbs, browned creeks,  
buffalo grass plowed under generations ago.

A withered limb and hand grabbed me  
around the throat as only man can do to woman.  
It clawed me, etched my skin,  
ripped my clothes, forced itself up inside me  
and down my throat.

The rivers grew brown  
and foamed as more grasses died.  
Centuries-old and taller still  
sequoias and mahoganies shook  
even these Hills  
as they were felled.

Foot to the floor, I drove across an empty plain,  
without seeing,  
searching for the first city, town, or farm.

We are conceived in tanks,  
rocked in polyurethane,  
fed from plastic bottles and forks.  
Running Water was swaddled under bark,  
rocked in buffalo hides,  
fed by spears knapped of obsidian.

I? I am a part of earth  
as poisoned hands grope my innards  
I shall die a slow and withered death

from those long chemical names  
that sound like nursery rhymes  
such as mollypollyollyoxenfree or  
butylcarbitylpropylpiperonylether.

When I was young,  
tens of thousands of migrating geese  
darkened the sky. Today they fly  
only by hundreds.  
Look at the autumn sky.  
See the missing ones?  
They leave silent scars  
as they fly from the north.