

## **The Rosary Confuses My Dogs**

When, walking in the woods,  
I pull out my long black rosary,

the beads loop down and jingle  
a little like the leash when I pull it out  
to put the dogs back on.

And the dogs, when they hear it,  
come running up,  
heads cocked, tongues lolling.

No, I say. It's OK.  
And they bound away again.

## **A Summer Day**

A ukulele band strums by the grave  
of an old woman I never knew.  
I lead the prayers, alb flapping,  
helping to lay the body to rest,  
and as the family lingers,  
quietly walk away, down the hill  
to another grave I remember from before.

It was winter then, and the oak was bare,  
and the one we buried was a boy.  
"I keep thinking he'll be cold,"  
the father said. "He'll need his coat."

But it's summer now, and the farmers  
are haying in their yellow fields.  
The dust of the harvest is softening the air.  
And as I stand at the marker, looking out,  
a feeling starts to come over me,  
a kind of peace, almost like the peace  
I prayed for up the hill, the peace of God,  
which surpasses all understanding.  
It spreads through my body like warmth.

I know. I'm just saying what happened.  
I'm just saying that it surprised me, too.  
The farmers, and the yellow fields,  
and the warm, summer wind.  
The ukulele band, strumming still.

## **The Other Side**

The falling of a leaf onto a pond is one movement  
in a process composed of many movements.  
It floats for a while, crisply. Then softens and sinks.  
It's funny what comes to mind. All day I think  
about a woman I haven't seen in many years.  
Her soft, brown hair. The way the corners of her eyes  
pulled down. It's not that I am filled with longing  
or regret. But I am filled with something.  
In a dream I climb a hill on the other side of town.  
It is an arduous climb. At the end I am afraid  
of falling. But then I look down and realize  
all the houses are exactly like the house I live in.  
In the distance, the same kind of highway.  
Everything is the same. It's just on the other side.

## **My Atomic Energy Merit Badge**

One dot orbiting another dot, in thread.  
What could I have possibly done to earn it?  
But I do remember Rick Morris  
and driving up Slate Creek to see the stars.  
It was the first time I ever looked  
long enough to disappear. Oh my friends!  
Where are you? The future is fast receding,  
like the universe. It is speeding away.