

## THAW

Daffodils stoop in April snow.  
Snow will melt.

Crows darken treetops with harsh songs.  
Songs bring dawn.

Violets nod to the morning sun.  
The sun rises.

Robins sing to morning light.  
Light grows warm.

Worms press life into hard earth.  
Earth hears God.

## SPRING MENDING

Damp like a sewing needle  
Draws earth's living threads into itself:  
Forsythia, daffodil, dandelion,  
Skunk cabbage, crocus, moss.  
Clouds cling like damp fluff to everything.  
Robins darn the rift between heaven and earth,  
Singing in twig-crown treetops,  
Then lighting on earth to pull  
Worms as thick, cold, and wet as rotting fallen twigs,  
Back to the trees. Clouds drip.  
Grey light runs across morning.  
Such grey I saw once before; it vanished fast:  
Such was my daughter's skin  
The day she was born. How came she then  
To the mysterious knowledge that she should  
Show herself to the day?  
How does the bloodroot know to open  
Its leaf robe and stretch its petals like fingers  
Reaching for cool light?

Lazarus, today you are a daffodil.

## TENSE SHIFT

Clouds bled  
In white torrents from a blank sky.

It was too late for it:  
We could smell the skunk cabbage  
And the daffodils the day before  
Pushing through the thawed mud.

We stood helpless as we watched  
Night come too soon.

It was a day close to spring:  
The blue sky  
Had softened  
Into the syrupy glue of life.

The sap rose as it pulsed under the sun,  
Flowing through veins of maples again.

They should not  
Grow too fast,  
The grandmother had said,  
Speaking of sap, daffodils, and the baby.

She knew  
The wind would come and snap

The branches and stems  
With one good crack of its whip.  
They might fall onto us  
Any time.

The grandmother feared  
For the daffodils

When they came up  
Too soon,  
She said,  
Because March can be crazy.

Then night came early  
And buried us alive in falling silence.

## SPRING RITE

It is our rite:  
My mother and I  
Scrape our rakes  
Across the front lawn,

Pulling spring up by the roots,  
Eradicating the brown of winter  
And the frost-burned, leather hulls of  
Chestnuts.

We and the grass  
Must have room to grow  
And air.  
We are unhappy

To let life emerge  
From death  
At its own pace.

We prompt the sun  
To sit up straight in the sky  
And high

Just because we twirl our  
Clocks forward and back.

Yet, we have no time  
For the crows'  
Calling, calling, calling

A morning that slumbers  
In a crib of young trees  
Set precariously  
In a brown hilltop

That echoes yet with the  
Lullaby of robins  
To the pale stars,  
A childhood

Beyond our grasp.

## PRECIOUS LIGHT

Morning's constellations  
In red and gold and platinum  
Encircle the neck of dawn  
Like so many fine old chains  
Around the neck of a grandmother.

I would claim them for my own  
If I could reach round to the clasp  
And take the bright strands in my hand.  
I would have them like a child  
Seeking treasure in her grandmother's arms.

They are my grandmother's  
Fine auburn beads and the chain of costume gold  
She wore so often  
She hung them in easy reach  
From her bureau mirror.

All those precious parallel lines  
Lead the mind's fingers to the edge  
Of the sky

To the cool silence before sunrise,  
When the birds mark time and  
We are all children  
Fingering precious light  
In our grandmothers' arms.