

Freshly Mown Field

Hay bales like beehives
in a freshly mown field,
water gurgles in a ditch
overgrown with grasses,
bird perches on a wire fence,
abruptly flies away, tunnel under
the freeway, *for agricultural use only,*
closed to thru traffic, is flooded with
irrigation ditch overflow, cars drive
through, despite the restrictions,
a convenient connection to the other
side, fly fishing guides available,
boats for rent, next to the canyon
road that parallels the river,
in a rustic wooden corral,
at the corner of the parking lot
of the truck stop, restaurant,
convenience store.

Main Road

Along the main road, in and out of town,
three deer and a bear, four trees and an eagle,
cut from iron, painted silver and gold, atop
a varnished pine arch, seven flags of all colors,
pulled by the wind from their poles, pulled
to their full size, pulled away from home,
kept home by their attachments, June wind,
setting sun, less heat than light, passing
freight train, rumbling energy, then
fading sound, clattering wheels,
everything lit is also in shadow,
red barns across green fields,
gray and white roofs,
green fields behind them,
summer comes up like dawn.

Signs

Signs for the tourists and travelers,
high and low, large and small, garish
and plain, information and attraction,
enter here, drive through, back one block,
exit here, see you along the way,
under the bushes, things thrown
from the road, no longer useful
in the continuation of the journey,
the freeway feeds and receives
what comes and goes,
here, where we are.

Bucket Handle

Bucket handle, no bucket, lid for a cup,
no cup, clouds splashed off the ridgeline
like muddy water stomped from a puddle
on the far side of the hills, neon sign flashes,
OPEN, OPEN, OPEN, OPEN, OPEN, OPEN,
men from the tire store run to fix flats for free,
a message to the tires to return the courtesy,
an old bicycle leans against a wall
under the word *donations,*
next to a house, a wooden ladder
on its side in the overgrown grass,
a wire shelf nearby, no merchandise,
used farm equipment in a gated yard,
impromptu museum, harrow and thresher,
yellow and green, credit union's grounds,
tastefully landscaped, reveal who has the
resources to make themselves presentable,
a white t-shirt lies crumpled by the curb,
its soiled appearance recently acquired,
as the sun sets, the wind dies down.

Worn Rubber Wheels

Old shopping carts behind the discount center,
interlocking silver baskets, worn rubber wheels,
two ready rows of retired veterans, torn up street,
workers gone home, machinery waits, without waiting,
for each tomorrow to give them back their purpose,
streetlights and traffic lights appear at night,
fat, lazy stars that can barely get off the ground,
apartment complex, encircled by a black road,
ringed by garages, half a hundred sliding doors,
the necessary accumulation of ancillary belongings,
a majestic ridge, above and behind the complex,
bare to the sky, rims the horizon.

Yield Sign

Yield sign on the
ground, proving itself,
black and white cat,
its head down, slinks along,
surveyor's tripod lies forgotten,
slatted fence cannot stop the cat,
basketball hoop on a pole
planted in the center
of a cement-filled rubber tire,
round TV dish on the roof
looks like it's taking a shot,
ceramic dog in a flower bed
staring unblinking at the sky,
twenty-foot silver horse trailer
with a shiny pointed prow,
in a yard like a ship
in dry dock.

Hospital Garden

Air conditioner rattles
next to the hospital garden,
crows in the tree call
their distress at a man
passing beneath them,
other crows, impassive
on adjoining branches,
a boy and girl pass by
on their bikes, shout *hi*,
a leaf crunches underfoot,
a man talks on a cell phone,
emergency vehicles only,
air soft in summer heat,
healthcare truck idling,
birds chirping, petals falling,
sweet smell of flowering bushes,
one bee harvesting pollen
inside the bowl of a flower.

Front Stoop

Broken cement
on the front stoop,
a clay pot of bright flowers,
birch tree in the yard,
climbing vines with red blossoms,
white slat trellis over the walk,
old antenna standing straight,
camper in the driveway,
pork-skins bag in the street,
rolling slowly over,
crackles in a light breeze,
picket fence made of plastic,
mud paw prints along the top,
running, barking dog, stops
when nothing happens,
three small girls playing
together across the street,
the dog circles a spot,
partly answers
a man's irritation,
calling from the house.

Green Couch

Girl on her back, one leg up,
on a green couch, on a wide porch,
on a quiet street, reading a magazine,
a sprinkler, insistent in its routine,
red motorcycle on the lawn,
for sale sign on the windshield,
car for sale, at the corner,
needs tranny,
gravel alleys on both sides
of a busy thoroughfare like
two generations in proximity,
traffic noise issues a call to action,
peace and quiet stay in the alleys,
on the tranquil side streets.

Town Center

The old town center at twilight,
laughter and chatter from a restaurant,
a motorcycle roars, a block away,
faux brick sidewalk a red cement carpet,
a truck passing sets off a car alarm,
a strolling couple cover their ears,
new quiet allows an overheard
conversation in a passing car,
two picnic tables chained to a tree,
with graffiti carved in one table,
*how will I move forward if I
don't know which way I am facing,*
the picnic tables are going nowhere,
they face nowhere in particular,
facing the street is a converted
bank building, a notice says,
*office and studio space
available.*

Bull Statue

In a public pavilion,
a statue of a bull sits,
with one hoof
across the other knee,
a large cowboy hat in his lap,
he seems intent, not restless,
as he waits,
the seat next to him
is vacant, with
not enough room
for another bull,
perhaps a smaller cow,
calf, or heifer,
a member
of the family.

Japanese Restaurant

Japanese restaurant,
open for business,
in the lower corner
of a mostly empty building,
its main stairwalls bowing out,
a man sits cross-legged, reading,
on the second floor fire escape,
the first hot day of summer,
the longest day of the year,
steps going up to an empty lot,
stone walls pushed out
by the earth, across from
the county courthouse
long and low, once modern,
a newly married couple's car
says HEY in large letters
across the back window,
a sign at the back entrance to
the public safety building says,
stop at camera to be identified,
tiny yellow flowers
in tight tufted grass.

Green Hose Sprinklers

Green hose sprinklers,
pumping seven fountains
to the green grass strip
in front of the natural food store,
cars and trucks for sale on the corner,
STOP AND LOOK, low mileage, 7 passenger,
collision center beside the dealership,
an empty lot across the street with twelve
black drums with white lids, designated *waste,*
across the street, a stately family home, now
the home of an *attorney at law, office hours,*
8:30-12, 1-5, Monday-Friday, flanked
by a parking lot and the block long
back wall of a grocery store,
next door to a house that offers
apartment for rent,
on the cross-town arterial
we sell gas, at the corner,
with upside down sevens
for the I's in *sell.*

Buddha by the Backdoor

Buddha, by the backdoor,
a gray frog sitting just as big,
long, swirling grass
like luxurious green hair,
a woman walking with
an old dog, panting,
nutrition consultant,
photographer, psychologist,
savings and loan drive-thru,
woman pushing a baby carriage,
Wildflowers of the Valley,
iron cut-outs in circular frames,
across from the movie theatre,
open door dress shop, soft breeze blowing,
professional comedians every Thursday,
confident in the grip of hostility,
you can't miss this show.

Blue Door

Aluminum ladder
leans against
a saloon wall,
reaches the roof,
no one around,
blue rope hangs
to the ground,
blue door
in the far corner,
old clock
on the sidewalk,
tells the right time,
open-air market
tomorrow morning,
no parking after 6AM,
a red plastic utility pail,
filled with one large rock,
in the voter registration
entrance.

Cars in the Yard

Cars parked in the yard
long past being driven,
broken windmill above a small,
empty office, painted yellow café,
espresso, bakery, breakfast, lunch, and dinner,
car wash, open bays, foam brushes on racks,
corner house surrounded by decorative art,
What is this place? next to a skateboard park,
city police station, white windows,
blue windows, red brick walls, giant
silver painted bell, inoperable hammer,
fire department, with *customer parking only,*
affordable funeral care, coin-op laundry,
ten white trucks in a closed lot
behind the post office.

Scarlet Restaurant

Scarlet and black restaurant,
two tiny tables out-front,
woman with tiny dog,
sits drinking coffee,
one leg over the other,
hands in her lap,
commemorative red oak
at the intersection
of Third and Main,
Chinese restaurant closed,
Asian restaurant open,
another red brick building,
commemorative stone,
first store in the valley, 1870,
handwritten sign,
these are flowerpots, put your
trash, gum, and cigarette butts
in the trash cans at the end of the block,
Writer's Club, Are you a writer?
Would you like to be? Like to share
your masterpieces with others?
This is the group for you.

Tattoo

Tattoo,
massage
and body work,
*Welcome to historic
downtown Ellensburg,*
wide side street
parallels Main Street,
the town's largest
shopping center,
firewood sale
at the pallet company,
storage lot, surrounded
by sheet-metal walls
and razor wire, next
to the office of aging
and long-term care,
garden book store,
eye clinic, hand therapy,
speech therapy, flagstone walk,
doctors' office, garden pagoda,
big white house, white awnings,
tree stumps sawed off at the knees,
alley like a country road, man
on a bicycle with a lavender
bag and lavender cap.

Shaded Yard

Shaded yard,
giant gnarled tree,
old picket fence on its side,
half-hearted barking dog
smells a hand, waits to be petted,
streams disappear underground,
wide avenues with little traffic,
wind chimes on a tree house,
swivel chairs on the driveway,
wagon wheels flank the front steps,
pile driver in the distance,
another building coming down,
another going up in its place,
old man walking at the pace
of a young boy dreaming,
droopy spruce like a hound
dog's jowls, carnations,
red, white, pink, yellow,
man digging in a yard
stripped of its sod,
tractor tire swaying
at the end of a thick rope.

Baseball in the Road

Old baseball lying in the road,
its hide nearly gone,
American flag in the breeze,
wrapped up in itself,
manicured lawn, whiffle ball,
hot tub, covered, on wooden deck,
empty medical building for rent,
idle equipment in a second-floor
operating room, cars pull up
to a four-way stop, some stop,
black cat with white shanks
climbs the highest hill in town,
giant red dump truck parked next
to a small house, collecting trash
that's never hauled away,
empty lot, scraped and scoured
of any trace of the past, except
for the gound beneath the past,
like-new truck for sale, hospital white,
asphalt roadway runs up to the sidewalk
smooth as the hem on a dress, long ramp
to a chartreuse and avocado house,
librarian checks himself out and
heads home, adjusting his mirror, man
on bench by the library rolls a cigarette,
sign says, *electric door, reading for all ages.*

Burnt Out Building

Burnt out building, windows replaced
with textured board the same color as the walls,
old wooden water tower, wooden ladder bolted to its side,
wide sidewalks, buckled and patched, farm supply storage lot,
horse troughs, fence panels and pasture gates, wire fencing,
plastic tubing, grain silos bunched together, recycling
center for paper, old caboose in protective custody, rusted,
faded, look but don't touch, old train station, closed,
Remember Please, in chalk on one wall,
two sets of tracks, still in use, with sidings corroded,
the bats fly out right before sunset, written on the wall,
with half a dozen cartoon faces, a frowning figure
lying on its side, bricks from the old platform,
pulled apart, some with hearts drawn on them,
joint bone of a cow by the tracks, stacked pallets
grown useless, worn by the weather,
factory buildings with sections abandoned,
painted names worn to obscurity, bearded man
in a small, red car pulls his shoulder strap
across his chest, the sound at the edge
of town is looser, louder, in faster pieces,
empty lots with dusty gray weeds.

School Bus by a House

Broken down school bus by a house,
this vehicle stops at all RR crossings,
birds in the trees, practical chirping,
small house with immaculate lawn,
sculpted bushes, an oasis of flowers,
newspaper boy, new white tennis shoes,
swing set in a yard, the end of the slide
jammed against the base of a chain link fence,
some house numbers as big as one's head,
some small as fingers, sailboat on the sidewalk,
what might have been a neighborhood grocery,
three trees in a yard, leaning south, karate sign
at the corner, car battery by the curb,
antique stove by a garage.

Wishing Well

Wishing well, a pan for the water,
bricked up windows like boxes of art,
doorway to nowhere, high off the ground,
a long row of thin trees in a patch of green
alongside a long, white wall, a low, curved roof,
sleek against the clouds in the sun, a woman
doing a crossword puzzle in her car,
raised pencil, wearing sunglasses,
with the motor running, a woman
sitting on the ground, pulling weeds,
bits of glass, from decorative stones,
cars parked, cars passing.

President's House

Newspaper by the front door, wagon load
of branches, truck load of household goods,
sidewalks like gray tongues spread out
in the heat of the day, shade trees
on quiet streets, as seen in the movies,
voices isolated in the viscous quiet,
one passes through smells, like walking
in a soft fog or a translucent pudding,
where nothing feels separate, no matter
how far away it is, on the same block
as the university president's house,
with a curved driveway, one room like
a great hall, a Japanese style walkway,
a giant stone fireplace chimney,
next to the campus, like a city
within the town.

Large Brown House

Large brown-shingled house with yellow trim,
trees in a low-mowed lawn like a museum of nature,
plastic bullfrog at the end of a hose, low stone wall,
a tree's branch cut and propped, like a hobby horse
or a perch for pterodactyls, white windows on
another house with red trim, top and bottom,
like caps and booties on the corners,
uncut grass in one rebellious yard
a luxurious reminder of wilder days,
old-fashioned surrey with red spoke wheels,
a white wicker porch swing, a spotless
yellow house across from a gray and tan
neglected house, an eye-high brick wall
with flowering plants along its full length,
at the open gate, a small wall, set back,
blocks the view, manicured lawns reveal
an almost unanimous agreement,
house to house, owner to owner.

English Bungalow

An English bungalow style house,
stucco walls, a long asphalt drive,
a huge green container in the street
set there for someone's remodeling,
upper Main Street steady traffic,
four ski-mobiles on a flat-bed trailer,
a red convertible with *collector* plates,
a newly paved parking area next to
a house with a large basketball court,
pizza car muffler rumbling, radio playing,
at the stop sign, driver in a baseball cap,
singing along, crab grass and dandelions,
lawn care truck, church next to a city park,
foothills of the mountains in the near distance,
kids with a bulldog on a leash, boy with turquoise hair,
girl skateboarding, *the owner of any animal shall be
responsible for any excreta deposited by his/her animal.*

White Fence

White picket fence, girl with plastic bag,
walking, coughing, a simple house
with semi-circular gravel drive,
a six-foot section of a felled tree,
big as four men wrestling,
a canopy carport over a
faded blue station wagon,
railroad tie flower bed, no flowers,
two small dogs fight as they guard
their humans from each other,
a red-sweatered woman
reaches out from her door
to retrieve the mail
from her mailbox.

Beige Quonset

Beige Quonset hut,
rusted farm equipment on display,
a small bridge without a stream,
a buckboard wagon on the grass,
hot sun a 360 degree space heater,
blue flamingo standing on one leg,
next to a flowery beach umbrella,
22 bags of grass clippings,
weeds all around them,
trimmed tree grown back
like a tufted bouquet, orange
armchair on the front porch,
white door, green rubber band on
the sidewalk, like an emaciated snake,
train whistle, like a horn, bleating
in the background, a train
chugging its way through town,
cat lying flat on the stoop,
an old wooden shed leaning
away from the dirt alley,
porta-potty, next to a newly dug
foundation, next to a new house.

Three Kids in a Pool

Three kids in a blue plastic swimming pool,
wearing face masks for deep-sea diving,
painted metal cut-out of a dog standing point
in a painted, metal, mailbox landscape,
the low, resonant murmur of a radio
playing in a house, kids on a purple slide,
in a park that opens out to playfields,
families at a picnic, under an open-sided
pavilion, baseball game, parents along
the first base line, sitting in lawn chairs,
under trees, shouting lazy cheers, two-car
garage, full like a silent market, calico cat,
at ease, on guard, Christmas lights across
half the roofline, by a shiny red tractor,
paw prints in the cement, dog barks like
an engine turning over and stalling.

Tall Trees

Tall cedar and tall pine trees
embrace in their reach for the sun,
sprinkler spray swinging back and forth,
rays of water, reaching from the house
to the sidewalk, to the cars in the road,
weathered chair by the sidewalk,
cushion tag says, *do not remove,*
under penalty of law, unless by consumer,
who hasn't bothered, dog pulling at his
owner's leash, leaping toward two boys
on bikes, man washing his horse trailer,
sidewalk dies out at the corner,
two fat birds, in the grass, fly away,
girls bike parked by the street,
cobwebs in its basket and spokes,
old mailbox, open and empty,
next to an empty lot.

Fairgrounds

Sign points to
fairgrounds ticket office,
says, *no loading or unloading*
of livestock, crows in the park
next to the public swimming pool,
wading pool, tube slide to the deep end,
recreational swim, family swim, moonlight swim,
next to the county fair entrance, *livestock judging,*
wool display, painted murals on the barn wall,
swine, cattle, draft horses, light horses, poultry and rabbits,
dozens of carriers loading and unloading animals,
shaved clay hillside, behind a frontier village, locked,
except when open, county fairgrounds corral,
spectator grandstand, display barns, senior
citizen lounge, recycling water fall,
picnic tables, shade trees, water tower
on the hill, national guard armory,
next to a man waxing his car.

Bumper Sticker

I'm with the band, bumper sticker,
boarded-up house, sign on every door, KEEP OUT,
rose bushes withered by the sun, petals brown, gray,
faded red laundromat, hamburger stand, animal
hospital, paint store, business plaza, hole in the ground
where a house once stood, house with two satellite dishes,
side by side, rows of potted plants on the shelves of a bookshelf,
moss on the north side of a tree, lone truck accelerates after
pausing at the corner, man walks dizzily down the street,
with an ear infection, affecting his balance, past an
orange house with red trim in a shaded yard
on a hot sunny day, like embers glowing
in a quiet fire, sports car for sale at the curb,
window washer's truck parked in front of his house,
potting soil in a white bag, aged grout in a red brick house,
sun room attached, hose lying idle in a yard of crushed stone,
truck parked, marked PAINTER, with a number to call.

On Campus

One building, like cubicles with portholes,
stacked two stories high, enough trees to make shade
almost continuous, walkers on cell-phones talk,
not to each other but to others, near and far,
bicycles racked with their front wheels up and
back wheels down, missiles ready to launch,
a five-headed fountain, insistent against gravity,
persistently unsuccessful, with no quit in them,
circular smokers' area, like a brick chimney,
three benches inside, with overhead heaters,
like the bottom of an elevator shaft with
the door open, around the corner from
the butterfly garden, dedicated to a former
student who died of cancer, car flies through
a parking lot, doors slam shut after
driver and passenger jump out,
a large pipe rises out of the ground,
goes back down under ground,
with a valve wheel on top,
its purpose not apparent.

Tennis Courts

Please, tennis shoes only,
abandoned colored streamers
on the tennis court after graduation,
next to a walled Japanese garden with
curved paths, green groundcover,
low trees, benches, a molded
cement stream, green water,
a red fish, flicking its tail,
moving as if annoyed,
wooden gates open
to a wide sidewalk,
across from a cantilevered
roof, above stone obelisks,
bunched in a row,
class of 1893, Austrian pine,
a student carrying his books
away from his body like he's holding
a bag of small, dangerous animals.

A Stream Bed

A stream bed, like a canal
runs alongside and cuts across
campus, the water flows snug
against its banks, long grass
overhangs its edges, home to
migrating ducks in the spring,
tree-lined boulevard, so-called
monkey house, *no trespassing*,
actually a home for the study of
chimpanzees, among many human
examples of architecture, where
form attempts to surpass function,
a small block building becomes
a great looming block building,
a gymnasium with splayed struts
for roof-supporting cables,
a cat's cradle against the clouds,
a dried banana skin on the ground,
psychology building sign stands
with its letters peeling,
an Italian motor scooter
by itself in the parking lot.

Art Building

Art building with high window walls,
bicycles in a rack like a mass-collision
stop-action photograph, green cloth
panels block the sight of ten tennis
courts sparsely populated, old rusted
radiators stacked by a cement mixer,
behind the music building,
sidewalks cross the campus
wherever students walk,
except for paths in the grass
worn by student pioneers,
a small patch of sunflowers,
incongruous against the wide sweep
of cut and edged lawns, serviced
by skilled maintenance workers.

Folded Quilt

A folded quilt
and a box of dolls
atop a high wall,
two raised barbecue pits
in a dormitory courtyard,
another mass pile-up of bicycles,
seed pods on the ground,
student sitting on a bench
with his head back, then leaning
forward, turns, looks behind him,
a squirrel sits and stares, turns
and ducks beneath some foliage,
a tarnished square sculpture rises
off the ground to the height of a man,
reverses itself and heads back down,
turns upward again, turns left,
then right, then rises skyward,
only to stop mid-air, opaque
windows in the library,
girl with a large leather bag
like the pony express used,
a man with a similar bag,
a man with a white bag,
class of '38, black tupelo,
white van in the parking lot
with eleven seats and storage
for all ten and the driver.

Fitness Center

*Fitness center, pet friendly,
we love our residents, check us out,
golf cart by the property office,
hundreds of rental units,
grocery, deli, kegs to go,
double, triple-load laundry,
two-story balcony apartments,
one old house in between the complexes,
some like cheap motels, some semi-luxurious,
rows of parked cars reflect their value,
willows by the house on the corner,
bus stop by the creek, not a through street,
houses for rent, stone slabs among the pines,
where the stream is wide and landscaped
among apartments called estates,
winding streets, open plaza
with a sandy volleyball court,
three women sunbathing,
drive safely, we care about you.*

New Housing Tracts

New housing tracts north of town,
reproductions of variations on a theme,
clean streets, little decoration, no trash,
a picturesque water mill, no water,
lovely names for cul de sacs
and dead end streets,
all the way to the airport,
attractive facades, sculpted lawns,
curving streets, fences, shades drawn,
as if all life is interior, a small town
on the high desert becomes familiar to
anyone who moves here from anywhere else.

Yellow Truck

A man sits in his yellow truck,
trying to start it, with his door open,
says to someone, *it's not getting any gas,*
overspray from a white roof, once
wafted onto the gray wall above it,
now shows the reverse of a shadow,
a soft tarp covering a car blows in the wind
like a woman's skirt, held down by a tire and
wheel on the hood, a two-person hammock
in the yard of a tree removal worker's house,
eye-level wooden fence with the finished
side in, across from a neighbor's fence,
with the finished side out.

Large Backyard

Large backyard with a trampoline,
encircled by fish netting, holiday lights
around the top, Aspen rustle in the wind,
old boat under an old-west slanted roof,
public works maintenance facility across from
a long low church building with a low steeple,
tall weeds like imposters allowed to live in a row
of decorator trees, glass globe in a tree stump,
delivery truck speeds through quiet streets,
multicolored backboard in a church parking lot,
small black dog, barking, tail wagging, truck
full of dirt, sign says, *free*, points to bikes, tires,
lawnmower, garden sprayer, large gas canister,
narrow A-frame house with shingled roofs from
ground to peak, ceramic bull in the flower bed.

Woman Watering

Woman watering her window pots,
on the hill above the lumberyard,
autobody shop, economy gas,
self-serve, cash or credit,
motel with electric-blue doors,
good home cooking café closed, snow plow
behind a defunct gas station, used car lot,
lost dog's picture in the window,
detailing center, rent-a-car,
complete automotive repair,
swimming pool in the middle
of the large motel parking lot,
giant round flower beds
below a spread-wing bird sign,
fine food restaurant, full dress Indians,
dancing, painted on big glass windows,
across from a smaller motel, rental apartments,
gray with white trim, farther out of town the sign reads,
trailer park, *welcome overnights,* then functional and
decorative metal work, *cold beer is here, and the wine is fine,*
casino, *try our new menu,* old western wagon next to the
pancake house, truck and RV parking, for customers only,
on the busy road out of town.