

## Walking in Ellensburg

At the southeast edge of town,  
hay bales like beehives  
in a new mown field.

Water gurgles  
in a ditch  
overgrown  
with new grass.

A bird perched  
on a wire fence,  
abruptly flies away.

\*

A tunnel  
under the freeway,  
*for farm use only,*  
*closed to traffic,*  
flooded with  
irrigation overflow.

Cars drive through,  
despite the restrictions,  
an easy connection  
to the other side.

*Fly Fishing*  
*Guides Available,*  
*Boats for Rent,*  
next to the canyon road  
that parallels the river,  
out of town, south to Yakima,  
in a rustic wooden corral,  
at the corner of the parking lot  
of the truck stop restaurant.

\*

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,  
next to a western store,  
between fast food  
restaurants.

Rows of signs  
for the tourist and traveler,  
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  
by the sidewalk,  
things thrown  
from the road,  
no longer useful  
on the journey,  
the freeway feeds  
and receives  
what comes and goes,  
here where we are.

\*

A bucket handle,  
no bucket,  
a lid for a cup,  
no cup.

\*

Clouds splash  
off the ridgeline  
like muddy water  
stomped  
from a puddle  
on the far side  
of the hills.

\*

In the June wind,  
under a setting sun,  
less heat than light,  
a passing freight train,  
with rumbling energy,  
then the fading sound  
of clattering wheels.

\*

A neon sign  
flashes,  
*OPEN,*  
*OPEN,*  
*OPEN,*  
*OPEN,*  
*OPEN,*  
*OPEN.*

\*

Men from the tire store  
run to fix flats for free.

\*

Outside a nursery school,  
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.

\*

In the evening,  
everything lit is also  
in shadow, red barns  
across green fields,  
gray and white roofs,  
green fields behind them,  
summer comes up  
like a slow dawning.

As the sun sets,  
the wind dies down.

\*

An old bicycle  
leans against a wall  
under the word  
*Donations.*

A wooden ladder  
lies on its side,  
next to a house,  
in the overgrown grass,  
a wire shelf leans nearby,  
with no merchandise  
on its racks.

Used farm equipment  
waits for sale in a gated yard,  
an impromptu museum,  
with a harrow and thresher  
in garish yellow and green.

A credit union's grounds,  
tastefully landscaped,  
a white t-shirt lies  
crumpled by the curb,  
its soiled appearance  
seems recently acquired.

\*

Old shopping carts  
behind the discount center,  
with interlocking silver baskets,  
and worn rubber wheels,  
like two ready rows  
of retired veterans.

\*

Beside the torn-up street,  
its workers gone home,  
machinery waits,  
without waiting,  
for each tomorrow  
to give them back  
their purpose.

\*

Streetlights  
and traffic lights  
appear at night  
like fat, lazy stars  
that can barely  
get off the ground.

\*

An apartment complex,  
circled by a black road,  
ringed by garages,  
with fifty sliding doors,  
storage for the necessary  
accumulation of ancillary  
belongings.

A majestic ridge,  
rims the horizon,  
above and beyond the town,  
bold against the sky.

\*

A yield sign  
lies on the ground,  
proving itself,  
a black and  
white cat,  
its head down,  
slinks along,  
a surveyor's tripod  
lies forgotten,  
a slatted fence  
can't stop  
the cat.

\*

A basketball hoop,  
on a pole,  
in the center  
of a cement-filled  
rubber tire.

A round TV dish  
on the roof  
of a house like it's  
taking a shot.

A ceramic dog  
in a flower bed,  
stares unblinking  
at the sky.

\*

A long silver  
horse trailer  
with a shiny  
pointed prow,  
is parked in a yard  
like a ship in dry dock.

\*

In the hospital garden,  
an air conditioner rattles  
in the summer quiet.

Crows in a tree  
call their distress  
at a man passing beneath,  
while other crows sit, impassive,  
on adjoining branches.

A boy and girl  
pass by  
on their bikes,  
shouting, *Hí*.

\*

A leaf crunches underfoot,  
a man talks on a cell phone.

*Emergency Vehicles Only,*  
air soft in summer heat,  
a healthcare truck idles.

Birds chirp, petals fall,  
sweet smell of flowering bushes,  
one bee harvests pollen  
inside the bowl of a flower.

\*

Broken cement  
on a front stoop,  
a clay pot of bright flowers,  
a birch tree in the yard.

Climbing vines  
with red blossoms,  
white slat trellis over the walk,  
an old antenna standing straight,  
a camper in the driveway.

Pork-skins bag  
in the street,  
rolls slowly over,  
crackling  
in a light breeze.

\*

Plastic picket fence,  
mud paw prints  
along the top,  
a running dog  
in the yard,  
stops barking  
when nothing happens.

Across the street,  
three small girls  
play together,  
the barking dog  
circles a spot,  
barely reacts to  
a man's irritation,  
calling a shout  
from the house.

\*

A girl lies on her back,  
with one leg up,  
on a green couch,  
on a wide porch  
on a quiet street,  
reading a magazine.

\*

A sprinkler thwacks,  
insistent in its routine,  
a red motorcycle on the lawn,  
*For Sale* sign on the windshield,  
a car for sale at the corner,  
*Needs Tranny.*

\*

Gravel alleys  
on both sides  
of a busy thoroughfare,  
two generations  
crossing each other.

The traffic noise  
is a call to action,  
as peace and quiet  
stay in the alleys,  
on the tranquil  
side streets.

\*

In the old town  
center at twilight,  
laughter and chatter  
from a restaurant,  
a motorcycle roars,  
a block away.

A faux brick sidewalk  
like a red cement carpet,  
a truck passing  
sets off a car alarm,  
a strolling couple  
cover their ears.

In the restored quiet,  
a conversation  
can be overheard  
from a passing car,  
like broken pieces  
of privacy.

\*

Two picnic tables  
are 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  
go nowhere, they face  
nowhere in particular,  
facing the street  
is a converted  
bank building,  
with a notice:  
*Office and  
Studio Space  
Available.*

\*

In a public pavilion,  
a statue of a bull  
sits, with one hoof  
across his 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 cow,  
calf, or heifer,  
some other member  
of the family.

\*

A Japanese restaurant,  
is open for business,  
in the lower corner  
of a mostly empty building,  
its main stair walls are  
bent in their decay.

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 go up  
to an empty lot,  
as stone walls  
are pushed out  
by the earth,  
across from  
the long, low,  
once modern,  
county courthouse.

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,*  
near tiny, yellow flowers  
in tight, tufted grass.

\*

Green hose sprinklers  
pump seven fountains  
to the green grass strip  
in front of the  
natural food store.

Cars and trucks are  
for sale on the corner,  
*STOP AND LOOK,*  
*low mileage, 7 passenger.*

A collision center  
beside the dealership,  
an empty lot  
across the street  
with twelve black drums  
with white lids,  
labeled *waste*.

Across the street,  
a stately family home,  
now offices for an  
*Attorney at Law,*  
flanked by a parking lot  
and the block long  
back wall of a  
grocery store.

On the cross-town arterial,  
*WE SELL GAS*, at the corner,  
with upside down 7s  
for the *Ls* in *SELL*.

\*

A small Buddha  
sits crosslegged  
by a home's back door  
a gray frog nearby,  
just as big.

Long grass swirls  
like luxurious green hair.

A woman walks an old dog,  
panting in the heat,  
past offices of a  
nutrition consultant,  
photographer,  
psychologist,  
savings and loan  
drive-thru,  
a woman pushing  
a baby carriage.

On the corner across  
from a movie theatre,  
*Wildflowers of the Valley*,  
displayed in iron cut-outs  
in circular frames.

An open door dress shop,  
with a soft breeze blowing.

Outside a saloon,  
a sign announces  
*Professional Comedians*  
*Every Thursday -*  
*Confident*  
*in the grip of hostility -*  
*You can't miss this show.*

\*

An aluminum ladder,  
propped against  
the saloon wall,  
reaches the roof,  
with no one around,  
a blue rope hangs  
to the ground,  
with a lone, blue door,  
in the far corner  
of the wall.

An antique clock  
on the sidewalk,  
tells the right time.

A hand-lettered sign says,  
*Open-air Market*  
*Tomorrow Morning,*  
*No Parking after 6AM.*

A red plastic pail  
is anchored  
with one large rock,  
in the voter registration  
doorway.

\*

Cars parked in a yard  
long past being driven,  
a broken windmill rises above  
a small, empty office,  
next to a painted yellow  
café, once a church,  
*Espresso, Bakery,*  
*Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner,*  
across from a car wash,  
with open bays,  
foam brushes on racks.

\*

A corner house,  
is surrounded  
by decorative art,  
*What is this place?*  
a sign says.

A skateboard park  
on the corner across  
from the city police station,  
with white windows,  
blue windows,  
and red brick walls.

\*

A giant  
silver-painted bell,  
an inoperable hammer,  
in the fire department parking lot,  
*Customer Parking Only.*

*Affordable Funeral Care,*  
*Coin-op Laundry,*  
ten white trucks  
in a closed lot  
behind the post office.

\*

A scarlet and black restaurant,  
two tiny tables out-front,  
a woman with a tiny dog,  
sits drinking coffee,  
one leg over the other,  
her hands in her lap.

\*

A commemorative red oak  
at the intersection  
of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Main,  
a Chinese restaurant closed,  
an Asian restaurant open.

A red brick building's  
commemorative stone  
reads: *First Store  
in the Valley, 1870.*

\*

A handwritten sign says,  
*These are flowerpots,  
put your trash in the cans  
at the end of the block.*

Another sign says,  
*Writer's Club,*  
*Are you a writer?*  
*Would you like to be?*  
*Like to share your*  
*Masterpiece with others?*  
*This is the group for you.*

\*

*Tattoo, Massage*  
*and Body Work.*

*Welcome to Historic*  
*Downtown Ellensburg.*

\*

On a wide side street,  
that parallels Main Street,  
the town's largest shopping center,  
firewood sale at the pallet company,  
a storage lot, surrounded by  
sheet-metal walls and razor wire,  
next to the office of aging  
and long-term care.

\*

A garden book store,  
eye clinic, hand therapy,  
speech therapy, a flagstone walk,  
a doctors' office, a garden pagoda.

A big white house  
with white awnings,  
and tree stumps  
sawed off at the knees,  
an alley like a country road,  
a man on a bicycle rides by,  
carrying a lavender bag,  
wearing a lavender cap.

\*

In a shaded yard,  
a giant gnarled tree,  
an old picket fence on its side,  
a half-hearted barking dog  
smells a hand and waits  
to be petted.

Streams disappear underground,  
wide avenues have little traffic,  
wind chimes hang from a tree house,  
wagon wheels flank  
the front steps of a house  
with swivel chairs on the driveway.

A pile driver  
pounds in the distance,  
another building coming down,  
another going up in its place,  
an old man walks at the pace  
of a young boy dreaming.

A droopy spruce  
like a hound dog's jowls,  
next to red, white, pink,  
and yellow carnations.

A man digs in a yard,  
stripped of its sod,  
a tractor tire sways  
at the end  
of a thick rope.

\*

An old baseball  
lies in the road,  
its hide nearly gone,  
an American flag,  
blowing in the breeze,  
is caught up in itself,  
on a manicured lawn,  
with a covered hot tub  
on a wooden deck.

An empty medical  
building, for rent,  
with equipment  
in a second-floor  
operating room.

\*

Cars pull up  
to a four-way stop,  
some stop.

A black cat  
with white shanks  
climbs the backside  
of the highest  
hill in town.

A giant, red, dump truck  
parked next to a small house,  
collecting trash that's never  
hailed away.

An empty lot,  
scraped and scoured  
of any trace of the past,  
except for the ground  
revealed beneath  
the recent past.

On the street, a *like-new*,  
bright white truck, for sale,  
the new black asphalt roadway  
flows to the edge of the sidewalk,  
smooth as the hem of a dress.

A long ramp  
runs up to a  
chartreuse and  
avocado house.

\*

A librarian  
checks himself out  
and heads home,  
adjusting his mirror.

A man, on a bench  
by the library,  
rolls a cigarette.

A sign in the window  
of the library says,  
*Electric Door,*  
*Reading for All Ages.*

\*

In a burnt-out building,  
the windows are replaced  
with textured board,  
the same color  
as the walls.

An old wooden water tower,  
a wooden ladder  
bolted to its side,  
wide sidewalks,  
buckled and patched,  
a farm supply storage lot  
holds, in rows, horse troughs,  
fence panels, pasture gates,  
wire fencing, plastic tubing.

Grain silos, bunched in a row,  
across from a recycling center.

An old caboose,  
rusted and faded,  
is fenced in, the old  
train station closed,  
*Remember Please,*  
in chalk on one wall,  
two sets of tracks  
still in use,  
with corroded sidings.

*The bats fly out  
before sunset,*  
is written on the wall,  
with half a dozen cartoon faces,  
a frowning figure lying on its side,  
bricks in a pile from the old platform,  
some with hearts drawn on them.

The joint bone of a cow  
lies next to the tracks,  
near stacked pallets,  
worn by the weather,  
near factory buildings  
with sections abandoned,  
their painted names  
worn to obscurity.

A 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,  
in empty lots with  
dusty gray weeds.

A broken down school bus,  
by a house, *This vehicle*  
*stops at all RR crossings,*  
birds in the trees,  
chirp their practical  
messages to each other.

A small house  
with an immaculate lawn,  
sculpted bushes, an oasis  
of flowers, bordered in stone.

A newspaper boy,  
in new white tennis shoes,  
a 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.

A sailboat on the sidewalk,  
what might have once been  
a neighborhood grocery,  
three trees in a yard,  
lean toward the south.

A karate sign, posted  
in a window at the corner,  
a car battery by the curb,  
an antique stove by a garage,  
a wishing well in an empty lot  
with a pan for its water,  
bricked up windows  
like boxes of art,  
a 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 sunny sky.

A woman does  
a crossword puzzle  
in her car, with  
a raised pencil,  
wearing sunglasses,  
with the motor running.

A woman  
sits on the ground,  
pulling weeds  
and bits of glass,  
from decorative stones,  
beside a row of parked cars,  
cars passing  
in the busy street.

\*

On a residential street,  
a newspaper lies by a front door,  
a wagon loaded with branches,  
a truck loaded with household goods,  
sidewalks look like gray tongues  
spread out in the heat  
of the day.

Shade trees on quiet streets  
like shade trees in the movies,  
voices seem 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.

\*

The university  
president's house  
has a curved driveway,  
one room like a great hall,  
a Japanese style walkway,  
a giant stone fireplace,  
on property next to  
the campus that sits  
like a small city  
inside the town.

\*

A sprawling brown-shingled  
house with yellow trim,  
trees in a tightly mowed lawn  
like a museum of nature.

A plastic bullfrog  
at the end of a hose,  
by a low stone wall,  
a tree's branch  
is cut and propped,  
like a hobby horse  
or a perch for  
pterodactyls.

One house has white windows  
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.

In one yard,  
an old-fashioned surrey  
with red spoke wheels,  
a white wicker porch swing.

A spotless yellow house,  
meticulously maintained,  
across from a gray and tan  
rundown, neglected house.

An eye-level brick wall  
with flowering plants  
along its length,  
at the open gate  
of the wall,  
a smaller wall, set back,  
blocks the interior view.

Rows of manicured lawns  
    reveal an almost  
unanimous agreement,  
    from house to house,  
    owner to owner.

    An English style  
bungalow has stucco walls  
and a long asphalt drive,  
a huge green container  
    is set in the street  
    for residential  
remodeling work.

\*

Upper Main Street  
steady traffic passes  
by four ski-mobiles  
on a flat-bed trailer,  
a red convertible  
with *collector* plates.

    A pizza car pauses,  
    its muffler rumbling,  
radio playing, at the stop sign,  
the driver, in a baseball cap,  
    sings along.

Crab grass and dandelions,  
a lawn care truck,  
a church  
next to a city park,  
foothills of the mountains  
in the 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  
or her animal.*

A white picket fence,  
a girl with a plastic bag,  
walking, coughing,  
by a plain house  
with a semi-circular  
gravel drive.

A six-foot section  
of a felled tree, as big  
as four men wrestling.

A canopy carport  
over a faded blue  
station wagon,  
a railroad tie  
flower bed  
with no flowers.

Two small dogs fight,  
guarding their humans  
from each other.

A red-sweatered arm  
reaches out from a door  
to retrieve the mail  
from a mailbox.

\*

On the west side of town,  
a beige Quonset hut,  
rusted farm equipment  
on display,  
a small bridge  
with no stream,  
a buckboard wagon  
in the hot sun,  
a 360 degree  
space heater.

A blue flamingo  
stands on one leg,  
next to a flowered  
beach umbrella.

22 bags  
of grass clippings,  
weeds all around them,  
a trimmed tree, grown back  
like a tufted bouquet,  
an orange armchair  
on a front porch  
with a white door.

A green rubber band  
lies on the sidewalk,  
like an emaciated snake,  
a train whistle blares  
in the background,  
as a train chugs  
through town.

A cat lies flat  
on a stoop,  
a wooden shed  
leans away from  
the dirt road alley.

\*

A porta-potty is propped  
next to a new foundation,  
a ragged hole in the ground,  
next to a newly built house.

Three kids play in a blue  
plastic swimming pool,  
wearing face masks  
for deep-sea diving.

A painted metal cut-out  
of a dog stands point  
above a painted, metal,  
mailbox landscape.

The low,  
resonant murmur  
of a radio plays  
from inside a house.

Kids play  
on a purple slide,  
in a park that opens  
out to playfields,  
where families  
gather at a picnic,  
under an open-sided  
pavilion.

A drowsy baseball game,  
parents along the base line,  
in lawn chairs, under trees,  
shouting lazy cheers.

A two-car garage,  
full like a silent market,  
a calico cat, at ease, on guard,  
Christmas lights, strung  
across the roofline,  
a shiny red tractor,  
paw prints in the cement,  
a dog barks like an engine  
turning over and stalling.

\*

Tall cedar and pine trees  
Embrace, in their reach  
for the sun.

Sprinkler spray  
swings back and forth,  
its rays of water reach  
from the house  
to the sidewalk,  
to the cars  
in the road.

A weathered chair  
by the sidewalk,  
its cushion tag says,  
*Do not remove,*  
*under penalty of law,*  
*unless by consumer,*  
who hasn't bothered,  
for many years.

A dog pulls at  
its owner's leash,  
leaps toward two boys  
on bikes, a man washes  
his horse trailer,  
the sidewalk dies out  
at the corner.

Two fat birds,  
in the grass,  
fly away.

A girl's bike,  
parked by the street,  
cobwebs in its basket  
and spokes,  
an old mailbox,  
open and empty,  
next to an empty lot.

\*

On the east side of town,  
crows perch in the park  
next to the public swimming pool  
with a wading pool and a  
tube slide in the deep end,  
*free swim, family swim,*  
*moonlight swim.*

Past the County Fair Entrance,  
*Livestock Judging, Wool Display,*  
a painted mural on a barn wall,  
barns marked *Swine, Cattle,*  
*Draft Horses, Light Horses,*  
*Poultry and Rabbits.*

Trailers for loading, unloading animals,  
in front of a shaved clay hillside,  
water tower on the hill,  
behind a mock frontier village,  
an equestrian corral  
inside grandstands,  
display barns  
for arts and goods.

A man waxes his car next to  
the National Guard armory.

*I'm with the band,*  
says a bumper sticker,  
by a boarded-up house,  
with a sign on every door,  
KEEP OUT!

Rose bushes,  
withered by the sun,  
their petals brown and gray,  
by a faded red laundromat,  
a hamburger stand,  
animal hospital, paint  
store, business plaza,  
a hole in the ground  
where a house once stood,  
a house with two satellite dishes,  
rows of potted plants  
on the open shelves  
of a bookshelf.

A man walks  
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 an  
ember glowing in a quiet fire.

Moss on the north side  
of a tree, a lone truck  
accelerates, after  
pausing at the corner.

A sports car,  
for sale ,at the curb,  
a window washer's truck  
parked in front of his house.

Potting soil in a white bag,  
aged grout in a red brick house,  
a sun room attached,  
a hose lying idle  
in a yard of crushed stone,  
a truck marked PAINTER,  
with a number to call.

\*

On the university campus,  
one building is shaped  
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 are racked,  
with their front wheels up  
and their back wheels down,  
like missiles ready to launch,  
a five-headed fountain  
spouts, out of the ground,  
in the plaza between buildings.

A circular  
smokers' area,  
like a brick chimney,  
with three benches inside,  
and overhead heaters,  
like the bottom of  
an elevator shaft,  
with the door open.

Around the corner,  
a butterfly garden,  
dedicated to a  
young woman  
who died of cancer.

A car flies  
through a parking lot,  
the driver and passenger  
jump out, their doors  
slam shut.

A large pipe rises  
out of the ground,  
goes back under,  
a valve wheel on top,  
its purpose not apparent.

A tennis court,  
in the middle of campus,  
colored streamers  
on the court,  
abandoned,  
after recent  
graduation ceremonies.

A walled Japanese garden  
with curved paths,  
green ground cover,  
low trees and benches,  
a molded cement stream,  
with 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.

A small sign  
by a tree:  
*Austrian Pine,*  
*class of 1893.*

A student  
carries his books  
away from his body  
like he's holding  
a bag of small,  
dangerous animals.

\*

A stream bed,  
like a canal, runs  
along-side, cuts across,  
the grounds, water flows  
snug against its banks,  
grass overhangs its edges,  
home to migrating ducks  
in the fall and spring.

On a tree-lined boulevard,  
a monkey house, *No Trespassing*,  
a home for the study of chimpanzees,  
a dried banana skin on the ground.

Among many examples  
of architecture,  
where form attempts  
to surpass function,  
a gymnasium,  
with splayed struts  
for roof-supporting cables,  
like a cat's cradle  
against the clouds.

The sign for the  
psychology building  
is small and low to the ground,  
its letters peeling.

An Italian  
motor scooter  
stands by itself  
in the parking lot.

\*

The art building  
has high window walls,  
with bicycles in a rack  
like a massive collision  
stop-action photograph.

Green cloth panels  
block the sight  
of ten tennis courts,  
sparsely populated  
in the summer session.

Old rusted radiators,  
stacked by a cement mixer,  
behind the music building,  
sidewalks cross  
where students walk,  
except for paths in the grass  
worn by bold young pioneers.

A small patch  
of sunflowers,  
grows, incongruous,  
against the wide sweep  
of cut and edged lawns,  
serviced by skilled workers.

A folded quilt  
and a box of dolls,  
placed on a high wall,  
two raised barbecue pits  
in a dormitory courtyard,  
another mass pile-up of bicycles,  
seed pods on the ground.

A lone student  
sits on a bench  
with his head back,  
he leans forward,  
turns and looks  
behind him,  
a squirrel stares  
and darts quickly  
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  
turns left, then right,  
then rises skyward,  
only to stop, mid-air.

Past the opaque windows  
of the library, a girl walks  
with a large leather bag  
like the pony express  
once used, past a man  
with a similar bag,  
past a man  
with a white bag.

A small sign:  
*Black Tupelo,*  
*Class of '38.*

\*

North of campus,  
an apartment complex  
with a *Fitness Center*  
and invitations to rent,  
*We're pet friendly,*  
*We love our residents,*  
*check us out,*  
a golf cart  
by the office.

On the same street,  
hundreds of rental units,  
grocery, deli, *Kegs to Go*,  
double, triple-load laundry,  
two-story balcony apartments,  
one old house, between  
the complexes, some like  
cheap motels, some semi-luxurious,  
rows of parked cars reflect the value  
of their respective residences.

\*

Willow trees by a  
house on the corner,  
a bus stop by a creek,  
*Not a Through Street,*  
newer houses for rent,  
stone slabs among the pines,  
where the stream is wide,  
among apartments called  
*Estates,* winding streets,  
an open plaza with a  
sandy volleyball court,  
three women sunbathing,  
*Drive Safely, We Care*  
*About You.*

\*

New housing tracts, north of town,  
variations on a common theme,  
clean, little decoration, no trash,  
a picturesque water mill, no water.

Lovely names invented for  
cul de sacs and dead-end streets,  
all the way to the airport,  
attractive facades, sculpted lawns,  
curving roads, fences, shades drawn,  
as if life is meant for the inside.

A small original town  
on the scrub steppes  
is made familiar  
to anyone who  
moves here from  
anywhere else.

\*

Back on the west side,  
a man, in his yellow truck,  
tries to start it, with the door  
open, says to someone, unseen,  
*It's not getting any gas.*

Overspray  
from a white roof,  
once wafted onto  
the gray wall above it,  
shows itself 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.

An eye-level wooden fence  
with the finished side in,  
across from a fence,  
with the finished side out.

A two-person hammock  
hangs in the yard  
of a tree removal  
worker's house.

In a large backyard,  
a trampoline, encircled  
by fish netting,  
with holiday lights  
around the enclosure.

Aspen  
rustle in the wind,  
above an old boat,  
under a slanted roof.

Tall weeds pose like  
imposters in a short row  
of decorator trees,  
a glass globe, lodged  
in a tree stump,  
a delivery truck speeds  
through quiet streets.

A multicolored backboard,  
above a church parking lot,  
a small black dog barks,  
its tail wagging, next to  
a truck full of dirt,  
a sign says, *free*,  
refers to bikes, tires,  
a lawnmower, a garden sprayer,  
and a large gas canister.

A ceramic bull stands  
in the flower bed of a  
narrow A-frame house  
with twin shingled roofs  
from the ground to its peak,  
a woman waters her  
window pots, on the hill  
above the lumberyard.

\*

On the road out of town,  
an auto-body shop,  
Economy Gas, *Self-Serve*,  
*Cash or Credit*, a motel  
with electric-blue doors,  
*Good Home Cooking*  
café is closed.

A snow plow sits behind  
a defunct gas station,  
a used car lot, with a  
lost dog's picture  
in the window.

A detailing center, rent-a-car,  
*Complete Automotive Repair*,  
a swimming pool in the middle  
of a large motel parking lot,  
giant round flower beds,  
below a painted spread-wing bird.

*Fine Food Restaurant*,  
full dress Indians  
dance on big glass windows,  
across from rental apartments,  
plain gray with white trim.

A trailer park says  
*Welcome Overnighters*,  
*Cold Beer is Here*,  
*and the Wine is Fine*,  
an old western wagon  
by the Interstate exchange,  
on the edge of town,  
*West to Seattle*  
*110 miles.*