

## *Photographing Change*

*for Ernestine Ruben*

How can it be that empty, intangible age  
  is stronger than we are?  
Fuelled by the sun, its sky-writes begin here  
on the eastern, left-hand corner  
  of a turning page  
every morning when, expectantly awake,  
we use up hours that taste and feel alike.  
  So why are days so differently  
the same? Think, days will happen after you  
and I no longer need to plan them sensibly,  
  or bring to mind a few  
urgent forgettable things we have to do.

Think, too, of the split second when a finger  
  triggered this snapshot,  
shooting time dead. Only when it won't  
recur can "that wonderful time" be caught  
  on sepia fly paper.  
So the old rascalion visits his wedding  
fifty years after the marriage ended in  
  pained, unphotographed divorce.  
And the dressed-up, smiling guests don't know  
  of course,  
how long they'll be arrested for. "That's... who?  
I can't remember what her name is now."

Is it an either/or game—keep your face  
and lose your name,  
or lose face by attending to the stream  
that keeps you inconsistently the same  
through time and place?  
Try photographing change. Try stones, try  
trees. Bearded with lichen, they are streaming by,  
free of Plato's petrified ideal.  
One wave laps into another, the foam-white  
struggle of the brook is its appeal.  
Let a river be invented by a stroke of light  
that anneals it as it vanishes from sight.