

## *Brightness Falls*

1.

The body in question was a boy,  
of course, and not to be interpreted  
(a singing interim called summer, interposed  
between sunlight and world, circumstantial  
warmth repeating *s* sounds), the body unquestioned  
was white (again), slow-blooming indecision  
inclined toward sun (*shall I be this? have I been  
that?*), and not fully unfolded as of mid-morning.

2.

The boys take off their clothes  
and then the sun comes out, like that,  
they try to inhabit the absence  
of rain, fill in blank clouds  
with their bodies, white skin  
which is flowering money  
(spent on a small town  
swimming hole afloat with leaf  
-shaped shale chips, slivers),

3.

accepted all over the world  
of privations (currents and currency), tender  
for all kinds of good and yielding too  
(*I touched him into here*): their copper,  
silver, gold, their precious metal  
skin a slick of sun and repetition,  
clinging water kissing them to light, late  
spring unclad with limbs asscatter.

4.

Flesh of anticipation, disappointment,  
flash of nickel, platinum and bronze: they slip  
into the shallow current or clamber  
down shale shelves, the falls

churning and churning (slurring  
description white and brown, misted  
gold when sun hits them),  
but never comes close

5.  
to consuming them. (Careful  
of the trick tide, rip tide,  
undertowing innocence towards  
drown and crash-on-broken  
-rocks.) They let the water  
overtake themselves (sibilant,  
susurrant) and then they  
overcome, shake wet light from hair.

6.  
Gully of purple cress, spring cress ditch  
foams down the stress-cut slope.

## *Kinds of Camouflage*

*for Robert Philen*

1. DÉJEUNER, WITH HERBS  
Then I am sitting naked on damp grass  
(it rained in my yesterday)  
while two white gentlemen  
in black frock coats share lunch  
around me, passing chèvre, cold andouille,  
and baguettes, passing bon mots  
in French, in someone's nineteenth century,  
my muddled impression of one. I can't  
understand a word. There must be  
a picnic basket somewhere, lined with  
a red and white checked cloth,  
some visual cliché, although  
I know the cloth's pale blue, pale echo  
of a sky that isn't there. They hardly  
notice me (two men now passing apples, and  
a bottle of medium quality red wine), or no,

## S H E P H E R D

I exaggerate, they don't see me  
at all, my body naked to the breeze  
too cold for noon although it may  
be May; my skin responds  
in kind and gets no answer, a situation  
I am used to. Brownd warmth of my flesh  
tones is quickly cooling, and the day  
is downcast, overcast: the basket's  
been tipped over, grapes, peaches,  
and some fruit I can't make out  
spill over, shadowing green. I hate poems  
about food. I am a painting  
by now, varnish smudged and darkening  
in storage, and getting hungry fast.

### 2. FIELD GUIDE

Above the highway we drove home  
between two hills of snow (from one  
classical town to another), a bird  
you couldn't recognise at first  
when I asked, *What is that?*.

Something trailing confused you,  
threw you off track, a streamer,  
scrap of dragon kite, festoon or  
crimson plume. *Oh, it's a red-tailed  
hawk, with something caught  
I can't make out. Dinner, anyway.*

A piece of will defeated  
in the wind, some little life's  
fluttered surrender. Perhaps  
a red squirrel, rare colour  
around here (you told me  
that), I could have thought  
but didn't. The hawk  
won't be hungry for long, we're almost  
home. It will be again.