

TWO POEMS
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EARLY MORNING HOURS

The fumbling for a familiar word
in the afterglow of an affair
is automatic, a semaphore
to flash traffic floors below.

Metallic voices rise on elevators
of air, and cigarette smoke
in ceiling corners stretches webs
that brush against the window glass.

Damp windows grey as these are found
propped open by bottles in such hotels.
They mirror nothing more of day
than night and early morning hours.

We knowingly come to expect no more
than looking for small change or cabs.
We seldom find the words as fresh
as fragile trees attired in ice.

CROSSING MINNESOTA BY NIGHT

1
Slat houses, a grain elevator and trees
move in the opened eyes of freight cars
that pass where siding warps in blue snow.

2
A switchman has left his warm car,
its lights dimmed for flashlight,
an arm to direct a lack of traffic. . .

3
I have walked along steel rails
out of grain elevator shadow into bright snow,
tracking life that fills a drifted ditch.

4
When hills are bare trees
and steeples arise--ancient swords
thrust into dark earth--
I have counted the miles
between small, southwestern towns
by the disappearance of grain elevators.

5
They catch in a departing sun
the private destiny of distance.