

In Praise of Dirt

I sink my hands
into springtime soil,
pondering possibilities.

This gardener's canvas,
a sculptor's medium;
silt softened by hard winter freeze,
melted to mud by March rain;
a child's magnet,
mud daubers' mortar,
medicine that makes the blind man see.

I hold handfuls of dirt,
the treasure sought by sodbusters,
Sooners and homesteaders,
Oklahoma red, Dakota black, California gold,
tilled, plowed, furrowed, irrigated, excavated, overworked,
blown into a bowl of fury,
a reminder that
we too come from dust.

I feel the fertility
of this life giving loam,
the earthworms' world, moles' maze,
anchor of oak, elm and ash;
the womb of the world,
it brings forth blushing apples,
welcoming, waving wheat,
and sunflowers striving
to kiss the sun.

I sink my hands
into springtime soil,
digging and dreaming,
like God did,
pondering possibilities.

On Forgetting

The lilacs fluttered against the window,
and I thought of you.

How easy, how simple really,
to keep you

pressed in my mind, like petals
between the pages,

like lilacs entangled in sunshine, a sweetness
ghosting on the wasp as it flies home.

Where is your home? The lilacs and I
would like to know.

Kansas Bullfrog

fish-like--wriggling blob
sync swims with sibling mob

growth spurt--swelling surge
wee appendages emerge

tadpole--small and cute
dons its daddy's tailless suit

adds lungs--webbed feet
change of habit is complete

no chin--silly grin
body wrapped in clammy skin

fat thighs--bulging eyes
sticky tongue for catching flies

big hop--belly flop
back into the pond--KER-PLOP!

huge frog--former tad
clammers onto floating pad

unseen--bug-machine
camouflaged, green on green

croaks out--raucous song
relentlessly, all night long

trying--to convince
the world he is a hapless prince.



SENIOR DEPRESSION

Respect disappears
after retirement.
Government harvested pastures
leave little nourishment
for the elders.
Doctors give token pills,
Pastors give token handshakes
saving encouragement for selves
and the important.
Insurance gives token assurance
of help when needed.
Technology zephyrs past the brain
residing in the eye of the hurricane of life.
Friends disappear
into their own cocoons.
Family struggles to conquer daily needs
competing with machine and youth
for scarce jobs, less time
to care for old or young.
The world waits for the old
to disappear.
No one needs jobless souls
taking up space and time for others,
to solve its problems.
Ageless wisdom
need not apply.

No Mystery

Rosaries—ancient, broken, beautiful.
 some constructed with wire.
Beads that are roses and others of copper lace.
Bracelet rosary. One decade is enough.
Medals and crucifixes.
Mysteries of the rosary.

Olden stationery
 letters unwritten
What would she have written?

Words of wonder:
 Why didn't she marry?

Statutes and lamps and music boxes
 towels and bedding, dishes
 used cologne
 hankies and bottles of hand lotion
Trusty nail clippers not needed any more.

A diamond ring
The prize pearl necklace...from Japan
 exquisite on black velvet,
 not worn a dozen times.

Small address book
 the bank, hairdresser, human society,
 nieces and nephews, the zoo.
The wanderer niece with one address
after another crossed off. There was
room for all of them, though.

A Nativity scene and jewelry box,
 large-print prayer book printed in Belgium.

"The Yank," World War II memorabilia.
 Towns I've not heard of. Sexists words
From male G.I.'s, a lone female military member
In a photo with the men.

She flew to...Europe, Hawaii, France (courtesy of the
U.S. Army).

Sympathy cards that I don't want to read.
 "For Someone Special" from the only remaining
brother, very grey but loving.

Close to her mother—at least in proximity.

Some go so quickly, others slowly. She went too fast.
 She didn't wait for me.
 Buried in white—like an angel.
 One last time with a rosary in her hands.
 Hair fixed and she didn't have to pay for it.
 No tip required.

Motionless.

Window to the world closes.

The holy water on the casket doesn't touch her. Was it
meant to?

She won't answer that phone anymore. No more,
 "Give an account of yourself."
No more plans.
No more birthday cards.
No more t.v. news.
No more shrimp.
No more crossword puzzles.
No more losing weight
And no more Mass.
No more.