

## vanishing point

in late evenings from my screen porch  
where i summer slept, i would sometimes see  
father's lower floor bed light, its tiny shards  
tossing light shafts into our tall spiraled oak trees,  
beams fracturing infinitely into black night air

often, i would hear mother's asthma  
breath soft calling his name; i imagined  
her touching his darkness with powdered hands

from the roundhouse yard two small  
town blocks from third street east, an iron  
engine coupled ferociously with its box cars;  
the metallic wailing, its dark rails off east,  
off west, off places i was not allowed to go

as he always did, father left early morning,  
disappearing around our green garage,  
returning later with stick matches, tobacco  
breath; news stories of Nam, house fires,  
Richard Nixon, and the one picture  
of his father in his back wallet pocket

years later, after mother had left me  
her Perry Como LP's, her Caldwell novels;  
years after she buried herself in her yellow  
wicker sewing basket, carefully threaded  
and locked into her cold, mausoleum niche

i stood before her marble door  
as winter tried to explain itself:  
white dry god flakes heaped  
on stained glass sills, child licked  
from small red mittens; nearby  
water frozen in a gray metal pail

it has been years since  
she has held me, years  
since she has practiced living  
like the rest of us; the entire scene  
a perspective, a vanishing point  
of delivery from mother's past,  
the converging lines of my future