ON A BUS TO THE AIRPORT, COLORADO

The window is filling with snow,
and then completely is gone
blank as Locke’s slate,
a mind rubbed clean with a cold
washing of snow. Nothing’s there.
This happens slowly
so that what I see is gradually
less than what I hear, the whoosh,
whoosh of the wide blades cutting an arc
across the world, thin ice shaving off,
the hiss of sleet hitting glass,
and tires beginning to crunch
the black ice, the rough ice, the dirty ice
thrown up like trash along the road.

Inside the warm bus, among quiet strangers,
I see in the white blur only the thinnest lines
of a wire fence, the blip, blip of gray posts,
for miles the same fence, a score
without notes—long, silent, equal measures.
Only in the West could this happen—
thousands of acres of fenced-in snow.

A big faint winter tree in a field of white.
Then, the outline of a barn, as if etched
by young Dürer directly on the plate.
And here, a window in a peaked roof,
like a birdhouse I hung in summer once
from a green limb. I watched from my window
little birds huddle in the near dark.

Can we unknow what we know? For there:
“a feverish huddle of shivering cows,”
as Lowell saw them, hundreds in vague clumps
like tufts of grass across a milky field,
their bony backs collecting snow.
They just stand there, noses together
breathing each other’s air.

Closer to the congestion of the city,
highway equipment: yellow and green
and orange caterpillar bulldozers crusted
with snow. Toys abandoned in a sandbox.
Crayons scattered in a ditch, lopsided,
dribbled with snow. A fauve geometry
on the graded slope. Nothing’s constructed now.

It’s wonderful to see the snow,
how it edits and rephrases, and builds up
obliterations and makes fresh again,
makes cold and still again, and in the plain,
uncluttered mind, muffles the living and the dead,
those I’m coming from, those I’m going to,
those I love, those I don’t want to think about anymore.