

DAEDALUS DIED NEAR JOHNSON CITY

in memory of Curtis Ramsay

One hour before the funeral I killed the bird.
The truck sped through dead Western Kansas wheat
Fields on a sunny, ice-locked midwinter's day
And shot him apart with the front grill and fender guard.
I raised the hood in the town where he'd shot himself.
The blue head and beak were blood-fused with the
Radiator, the skin laid bare where the bumper plate
Had severed the wing on its ill-fated Icarian flight.
Near the casket-laden church I broke out my tools.
Taking the wrench and the screwdriver I drove
The broken body between bumper and frame, leaving
It on the dirt and dinner plate of late-afternoon scavengers.
It was warm when they buried him,
Glasses on his head and hole in his heart.
I held his daughter while she cried,
Her shuddering ribcage and shaking breasts
Pressed tight against me, hair hay-sweet
Summer in my nostrils,
The sun melting my eyes to wax; yellow,
Red, orange.
That evening I watched her mother
Sit alone among mountains of flowers.

She held her new-born grandson,
His shaking hands and trembling fingers
Reaching to her face, hair windy spring
Dandelions near her cheek,
The night stitching around them; grey,
Black, shale.
In the day's twilight she whispered in the barn.
The huge broken-eared dog snuffed our footprints from
dust
On the barn floor, looking for traces of a bloody,
sheared-wing
Master fallen days ago in the darkling hedgerow.
Past the holly above the front door came voices.
The rustle of skirts and loosened ties laced with Beef Stew
And cinnamon rolls pushed the noon-bright
Darkness away from warped doors and window jams.
She mapped out a short-cut for me with a hug.
Distant suns peered at me as I flew the long way back,
Unknowing, clipped cold in freezing winds; silent when
asked
The path from the maze without wax or wings.

Jubal Tiner