

## PERSON, TENSE, MOOD AND VOICE

(for Leah, who wanted a Tomorrow Sandwich and got tomatoes like the rest of us)

A dark age in a man-made forest,  
rendered in grisaille. I thought,  
in the Old World as a young tourist,  
those openings to rooms wrought  
in shuttered stone at once could prove  
reincarnation and define  
those generations. What strange love  
will speak for us and draw our lines?  
Once I went to Canterbury  
on a train to see what the past  
looked like. Was it a hut on a prairie  
or perhaps a ruin? They asked  
my child if she'd eat "to-MAH-to." "I'd LOVE  
a Tomorrow Sandwich," she cried, enchanted.  
At the end of a narrow street, above  
the pavement flew the vassal-planted  
vaults of blue and gold, free-soared  
the vast magic castle. I stood  
at the turn of the twisted stairs where warred  
the king and his bishop for a sainthood,  
folded in the bloody lap  
of a famous martyrdom and knew  
I had been there before, foresaw the trap  
closing around me gently, true  
to my loves, but suited strangely, as artists  
are, to destiny as duty.  
Now I stand stricken, long-lost chartist,  
in attics with remembered beauty,  
wearing a piece of clothing for each  
of my dead friends. After a life  
of needful service, who will redeem  
this rubble? Who would speak to a wife,  
stranded among these scraps and tag ends?  
The women who went before would say,  
"Waste nothing." They pieced the castoff ends  
of the journey of a lifetime, away  
in a covered wagon, into a rule  
called "The Road to California." Speaking  
a private language, a troubled pool  
of baby things deep on the creaking  
boards, this tide of rags, eddies  
about my feet in wavelets, laps  
my ankles; I feel the beat of the steady

coriolis lapping at  
the world and winding time – backward  
and forward in creation's dance.  
Hills become islands, rivers run slackward  
or to the full, the smoothly slanted  
floor of the sea concealed and revealed,  
the do-si-do of oceans, march  
of mountains in and out, reeling  
beneath the earth and made once more.