

Richard Cecil

In Memoriam

for Lynda Hull

Wires bowed with snow sway from the power pole.
Somewhere down the street, a fuse explodes.
Lights flicker and go out, then on again,
then out for good, and lines I just keyed in

have disappeared off of my laptop's screen
and sunk, unsaved, to the Limbo of electrons
which, half a second ago, bunched into letters,
but scatter, now, like ions through a cloud chamber.

To find them and reform them into words
I'll have to tunnel back to where they paused
an instant in my brain's network of nerves
and read ghost images they faintly etched

into the walls of my short-term memory
before they streaked off toward oblivion
at the universe's edge at the speed of light.
To concentrate on searching for their tracks,

I plug my ears against the moaning wind
after I switch off my useless laptop
and replace it with a pen and pad of paper
propped on my knees, ready to take down

whatever I haul up from my descent.
New thoughts brush by me, but I shrink from them;
I mean to think of just the lines snatched from me
and dragged below right after they were born.

I feel my way into my memory,
 whose walls are crayoned with crude graffiti.
 I must be in the long-term anti-chamber,
 where the broken furniture of childhood's piled.

I scramble through the jumble of stuffed toys
 which, if I pause, will swamp me with nostalgia.
There's Teddy leaking stuffing! There's Rudolf, de-nosed,
his antlers drooping from frayed threads and . . . No!

Beyond the anti-room, the cave expands.
 Its ceiling glows with blue florescent light
 which illuminates high rows of file cabinets
 crammed with labeled folders full of facts,

such as what temperature turns rain to sleet
 and causes cars to spin out, as mine did
 twenty years ago, which nearly killed me,
 and which killed Lynda two years ago exactly.

Today's the anniversary of her death
 in late March, when rain froze, just like today,
 except today it freezes miles above
 the wires and branches that it's tearing down,

and piles so high that it imprisons cars
 in driveways, and their owners, trapped inside
 their cold, dark houses, curse their immobility.
 Two years ago, they could have sped, like her,

at eighty miles per hour into a tree,
 and have their ashes scattered three days later,
 and even the day they died be half forgotten
 after a couple of spins of the Season's wheel.

Be patient. Lineman have been climbing poles
 and city road crews plowing drifts all night,

and though they fail to keep up with the storm,
April's coming to sweep it up for them.

Whan that April with his shoures soote
melts icicles dangling from our roofs,
and lights and furnaces click on again,
I'll forget my friend died in cold rain

March 29, 1994
unless I write it down with pen and paper
in lines shaped by the ghost of rhyme and meter —
not the lost lines I descended for,

which glowed an instant longer than my thought,
and then flamed out in my mind's cave, extinguished
by ice's touch, just like my young friend Lynda,
whose brilliant lines burn on and on without her.