

Candace

looks so good
sitting by the window
in her chemotherapy bandana

it's hard to believe
that this is not just
the latest fashion statement
from the front rank

of the Paris avant garde,
and when she gracefully unwraps
the coils of blue cloth
to reveal the elegant, pale eggshell

of her nude skull,
we think, "This
is how Beauty conquers Death

— by Style, which sails above
the slums of accident."

But later in the city
when we are stopped in traffic
behind a long unmoving line of cars

which is like a blocked artery
in the chest of a giant
keeled over his dinner
of steak and fries

we feel the rising heat
and the glass and concrete towers
trembling above us
and the blazing hammer of the sun.

Then we remember
we desperately remember
the only thing protecting us
is the thin layer
of our precious disbelief.