

Mount Rainier

I.

Airplane windows
are telescopes in
reverse. Look down:
from fourteen thousand
feet it's all dollhouses
and cell phone-sized
skyscrapers. Farms
a green and brown
chessboard, with silos
as rooks, tractors as knights.
People, even your ex,
can only be inferred.
Your problems are
manageable from here.
The Rockies pass beneath
you like one hundred knees
and elbows, bony
joints thrusting upwards.

After hours of stale
superiority, you look,
not down, but out,
across. Your pilot tells
you what you're seeing.
Dressed in snow,
except where some
rough edges cut through
to the sun, this peak,
you understand, deserves
a name. This one, in
fact, has two. Takhoma:
Salish word for *white*
mountain. A milky breast
to feed the sky, you
think. A sentient being,
watching back. It's larger
than your dreams. You
learn your measure, that
someone your size belongs
in a dollhouse, can't even
have problems this big.

II.

The ferry crosses
from Mukilteo to Clinton
in fifteen minutes,
the Sound a salty Douglas-
fir-lined wash of wind
and water. Whidbey Island
is the sum of its red cedars,
narrow highways, miniature
farms, and sand-blown
towns. Hedgebrook lies
thirty minutes' walk
from Double Bluff Beach.

Your shoes crunch
tufts of grass, hypnotize
as you watch for snakes
to slither up from the ditch.
You come down to

the shore just at the end
of an endless succession
of beachfront homes—
each staking claim
with its own proud flag
to one-eighth-acre
of America—long miles
of dun-colored, steadfastly
unweathered vinyl siding.

You turn your back
and look away: across
the driftwood strewn
along the high-tide line,
across the mud-colored
sand puddled with tide pools
and sun-bathers, out across
the Sound's two-toned
blues, the faint houses
chalked on the far shore's
hills, Seattle's stark gray
shadowy skyscrapers,
across the foothills, to
the Cascades. And there—
two hours distant, at least
a hundred miles away—
again, you see it. It arrests
you, rising motionlessly, its
mammoth curved peak white
against the ice-blue horizon,
emerging from the earth
like a half-moon in broad
daylight, Diana wrenching
loose of Pluto's hands, forever
frozen in escape, not quite
contained, nor fully free.