Day-return tickets are a parenthesis.  
The conductor's hole-punch clicks: ( 
a comment and a cup of tea  
and click:) you're back again,  
trying to finish your sentence.  
Stardust Mini-holidays  
on the sunny banks of elsewhere --  
toilets down the hall, there's a view --  
you can footnote them.  
Tunnels draw you back to the main clause,  
creeping in from the outskirts  
on the map of subordination,  
but just missing connections.  
Coming into a station  
reading the overhead wires  
like a blank comic strip,  
after countless hours riding backwards,  
looking out for the 41st shade of green.
Seeds escape the planting hand
into trowelled furrows,
dark and acrid with compost,
soil patted over, tucked in.
Hose-nozzle showers bathe the
fuzzy zucchini leaves,
clambering beanstalks,
new tomato blossoms --
Summer growing,
salads making themselves.
The physical language of
sweat and strain and
dirty clothes in the washer and
sweet, small carrots in July.
Judicious garden --
no crime in weeding,
pulling the unnecessary to grow
a radish.
Passing through on his bicycle
he'd noticed the dusk-light in this courtyard.
The images clicked off
by the turning spokes
lay half-developed in his mind --
he's come to hunt them down.
He puts an eye to the camera --
today it is a willful thing, a blind lense
that makes a horizon of 35 millimeters,
shape a matter of shading.
Where there is no inspiration, there is method --
adjustments of speed, aperture, angle --
there is some art in precision.
The lush light, rough terracotta brick,
shadow arches; they resist two dimensions,
space will not yield to the shutter.
One roll exposed, the light fades,
images still agitating in the tray.
2 a.m.
A light comes on in the house behind,
coming over the shutters to make
a big T on my wall.
The house still smells of
the second pot of rice I burned.
From the next room,
the dreamy declaration of a sleeptalker:
"She cheated."
The day's mail brought a letter from Mom
saying, Beware of terrorists,
and, I'm tired of fixing food.
And a letter from a friend --
next year I'll be living in the old infirmary,
the scene of so many bladder infections.
A room with iliterate insignia --
poster shadows, petrified gum.
And no house behind
to turn on lights in the middle of the night
and make letters on my wall.
We sat in accompanied solitude
at the tables of a summer cafe.
Waves relaxed up the shore --
in the still moment between coming and going
reflattened --
and pulled back through the rocks
sounding like the applause of some other audience,
tugging loose the seaweed tangle of thoughts
knotted up by hostels and bureaux de change.
We watched the day slip away,
a strange day that had tried to happen
despite the clouds and eery wind
through the wriggling telephone wires, humming
a native tune of somewhere else
-- a wind that might have been fierce
if it had been cold,
that raised the dust from a dig
into our mouths and eyes,
so we chewed on grit even as we stood in the shower
excavating our ears.
Waves swallowed the day in regular gulps,
taking us farther from any idea of why we had come,
of why these low stone walls and stumpy vineyards
crouched on the stair-stepped hills,
or how mute they would remain, rooted in
the rocky soil, pale in a sunbeaten country.
I
Dusk met me on the doorstep
where I sat waiting for it,
watching a man wash his truck,
singing to the locked neighborhood
out of tune, with headphones.
A girl passed, absorbed in the sidewalk,
the click of her heels
spelling out going.
The clouds, shadows
against sky, like twilight bicyclists,
blinked a partial moon, blurry
as through suds-smeared truck windows.
I was looking at the streetlamp
just when it went on.

II
Night-shuttered, I sit
by my heater, circumscribed by papers
that started as final copies
and became rough drafts.
Wind in the flue rattles
the plywood face of a fireplace
where a gas heater wheezes
through its textured log front --
benign asthmatic, allergic
to itself.

III
A holiday wakes up to lawnmowers
grooming clean-shaven gardens.
A boy on a bike
clicks a stick along the fence
of the park perimeter, clockwise.
Next door a man trims his front hedge,
clipped into the shape of a dog --
a colossal terrier.
He prunes its belly, pares its ears,
snips its leafy expressionless face
that watches people going to and from
with dog-shit on their shoes.
On a Moroccan Bus
Sandwiched between towel-wrapped women
carrying children and live chickens,
we shrink under the dark leers
of foreigners who find our fairness strange,
and the radio wails something reminiscent
of a cat being tortured.
We turn to each other
and we are at home, on the lawn,
arranging flowers, balloons, canopies --
you in white, veiled,
I in pink, garlanded,
and the man in black --
he's sitting three rows in front of us,
a suitcase jiggling over his head,
precarious in the luggage rack.

I sit on the bus,
my groceries perched on my knee,
smiling back at the bland smiles
of fair people who don't find me foreign.
A glint of sun
and I'm at home, on the lawn,
sneezing from the pollen,
writing you a letter with questions
about things that haven't happened yet.
The wish for watercolors --
no lines
or definition,
just color melding into color,
a range of grays.
The dipping and the washing --
fading and
gently fading
to the smallness of suggestion,
the pen a brush.