

*Shadowboxer*

rearview mirror  
tells me things  
backward and behind

I see myself,  
my eyes read  
*disappointed*

though there is a light behind them

it is the flame from my heart

I can see it dancing,  
unwilling to go out,  
strutting like a cocky prizefighter  
to the ring

(you looked so beautiful  
in the Christmas tree light)

thoughts of somewhere and someone  
commandeer me,  
skillfully making me forget  
the many joys I lay claim to

but then  
like some figment of white noise  
came movement

the corner of my eye  
tugged the pupil sideways

behind me  
were mad arms  
flailing like blender blades

a fiery dot  
lost among night

a man shadow boxing,  
a cigarette clinched in his mouth,  
his foul brown mouth

but what struck me about him  
was the way in which he punched the air

it was as if he weren't on a sidewalk  
with the entire world as witness,  
but as if he were alone  
looking in his bathroom mirror (where most men are strongest)

he did not mind that he looked mad  
he did not mind that he was doing what  
a million men had done before him

he fought for different reasons

he fought  
not because he was caught  
between the gears of life,  
quite the opposite, in fact

he fought  
because he had been freed from them

and now he stretched his wings  
like some great bird

and I admired  
his fight

(I can still feel your fingers  
on my face)

I wished  
that I too  
could fight  
like him

indifferently

cut loose  
from all sense  
of shame

perfectly  
stained

and  
I watched him  
in the rear view mirror  
until he  
stopped punching  
and the fire within him  
resumed in its  
slow and steady burn

(I love you)

and I took refuge in  
that he was out there

living among the  
unbearably sad world

a world full of people who accepted  
“too late”

and my own self pity  
appeared to be so small  
and infantile  
compared to him

how that beautiful man would laugh at me  
if he knew my ailment

“a woman?”  
he’d say

“ha.”

and as he crushed  
the hot red cherry of his cigarette  
with the rubber heel of his boot

smashing it into the concrete curb  
and the cold wind blew the ashes about (the kind of weather good for saw blades)

I wished him the best  
not only for his sake,  
but for mine

...keep fighting,  
                  fighter