

THREE POEMS FROM "LIGHTS I HAVE LOVED" (Red Dashboard Press, NJ)

Ages and Stages

My mother had just told me about stages. Plays, puppet shows... I wanted to be on stage so I climbed up on that small table in the side yard and began dancing to no audience.

Right to left, left to right. And then I danced backwards. And then more backwards.

What I remember next is upside-down, precisely vertical, top of my head inches from the concrete. And next, after that... well, other things. Zinnias in the backyard, paper and scissors in the kitchen, my sixth birthday.

I don't know whether that fall changed my head, whether it made points blink, lines shimmer, the equal-sign arch like a bridge, and the insides of things

cry out for help.

"For a Long Time"

"For a long time I used to go to bed early..." Proust

For a long time I didn't know about reading. When my mother sat on that special chair on the right I thought she was looking at pictures and using them to make up the story or maybe just making up the story and that thing she held was some ritualistic object, something like a candle though it flickered in a bigger way.

For a long time I didn't know there were words in that thing, I thought words could only be spoken, things in the air that flew then disappeared, we had to say them again and again.

For a long time I didn't know about reading so I didn't yearn to know how to read, didn't know reading was something to know how to do, there was only bedtime and my mother's stories and that flickering thing she held

instead of me.

## Teaching Observation

“You spent twenty minutes telling them how wonderful it all is.”

I'm sorry.

It *is* wonderful how we can get around both the vertical line rule and the horizontal line rule

how the curve can flower, spiral, and cross itself again and again

how we can now make any pretty picture we want.

Yes, it is all very wonderful but okay, I promise, I won't ever again waste so much time.

And thank you for letting me in on the big secret, how to get through the syllabus:

by not telling them how wonderful it all is.