

It's all the magic horn, mama, that golden fetish,
possessed and possessing, that haloed concubine,
caressed and polished, surrounded with plush.
And you-- chapped, smacked,
earning your master's degree in martyrdom,
sewing clothes out of mill ends,
that eternal alloy suspended between you
even in bed, that icon he hocked once
to buy you an emergency doctor in Dayton.
And you sold your mother's ring to get it back.

And the man, mama, with the hard mouth,
dead weight in the bus seat, little slivers
of life telescoped in battered cases
under collapsible stands. Trumpet man.
Pitched all shades and angles like shadows,
worse for women than drifters. Gone too high
too often, a pile of singed feathers
dripping wax on the downers, always patching
to fly one more set too near the sun.

Was there a man at all?
Or just a flared gold phallus that seduced you
and crammed you in the gears of a music box
on wheels, hurled you across the bad-weather map
into broken-john motels with lint bedspreads
and the boozy corners of never-quite-level halls
full of lurching bodies and bad acoustics?

Tears emptied, he mounts the god syndrome
like mercury, surpassing sound, no longer
protoplasm and metal but some new alchemy
entering the last panging tunnel you sealed
and secured. Driving deeper, blowing down
your barricades like Joshua,
peeling off new notes like bright blisters,
exorcising the orchestra, resolving
each chord with light. Nebulizing fire.

White consumes you, turns you immaculate,
unhurting anymore. The trumpet
fluoresces like his phosphorous eyes,
confetti light orbits his head.
His image blazes beyond seeing.

You open your eyes as the waiter pours champagne,
hear something shut like a latch, focus absently
on an alabaster herald you hadn't noticed before.