

## **The Nobel Prize In Mathematics**

So, the story goes that the  
mathematicians get no credit  
because of a woman and her  
calculating lover, the long  
division of a brilliant heart.

The chemists and doctors, the  
physicists and writers all make  
the Swedish trip routinely. But  
not the mathematician, left  
alone with his numbers and  
their reductive ways.

Poet, playwright, chemist, inventor,  
pacifist with an explosive mind,  
Alfred Nobel and his millions,  
an element in his name and a  
field of imitation in his wake.

And yet  
the story, if true, is proof  
once again that nothing  
not money  
not patents  
not even Italian property  
can make up for a lover lost,  
that not even genius is immune  
to the multiplicities of desire.

## **The Puzzle Women**

For four hundred years  
the puzzle women will spend  
their days in the offices of  
what was once Stasiland, piecing  
together the papered lives  
of the captives, tracing back  
out who did what to whom  
and when and how and why.

For four hundred years  
the puzzle women will reassemble  
the days a line at a time,  
a hundred and twelve miles  
high, rescued from a phalanx  
of burned out shredders  
smuggled in from the West  
as the Wall began to fall.

For four hundred years  
the puzzle women will cross  
reference the stories of a private  
mapmaker and the death strip,  
of a man bleeding with the  
bandages just out of reach,  
of lovers telling on lovers,  
of children on parents, of  
mothers on sons, one spy  
for every six East Germans.

### **Untitled #168**

A goldfish has a three-second memory,  
at least that's what I read somewhere.  
And, really, maybe it's not always such  
a bad thing, this constant turnover.  
Sure, he may never remember his  
wife's birthday or the combination  
to the wall safe; he might forget  
his heart pills or to pick up dinner  
on the way home from work, low  
points on the arc of criminality.

Then again, he'll never, never know  
about the awful screech of a breaking  
car or the suddenness of a pulmonary  
embolism. He'll never catalog the  
words nigger or kike or faggot,  
won't hear a politician lie and then  
lie about the lie. And he won't,  
thankfully, ever hear the telephone  
ring at three in the morning and  
know that absolutely nothing good  
can possibly come of it.

## **A Birthday Wish**

I hope the card arrived on time.  
And that you have a good birthday.  
No, make that a great birthday.  
A birthday so great that  
it verges on treason.  
A birthday so amazing that it causes  
an international incident and  
you have to flee the country  
just for the safety of your family.  
And when they come to question me about it  
(and they will because we have such  
a checkered past)  
I'll tell them nothing, absolutely nothing.  
They can torture me but I still won't talk.  
I'll spit in the face of the interrogator.  
I want you to have birthday so mind-blowing  
that it becomes instantly legendary and  
a thousand myths spring up around it,  
all somehow involving vodka, water polo  
and Dwight D. Eisenhower  
– in no particular order.  
Really, I just want your birthday to be  
that goddamn good.