

E. W. B., whom I (thankfully) abandoned for the will of God

know this: what they call decent people do only one thing.
They know where their mouth is, and where their foot is,
and they look long and hard to ensure the two don't connect.
But you in your wretched aplomb connected them always,
spat your teeth at my feet and grinned.
When we were washing up the dinner dishes you delivered words like a slap,
quiet and intimate in my kitchen.

know this: those six years were a wasteland,
and I would heap the ash of them over you
and what they call
“decent people.”

You were not that man I met in the fields of wheat,
some city called Bridgeport in the blank heart of Nebraska.
He learned at fifteen with a pistol in his hands that he was a man,
not a boy.

That man is my husband. When he married me he still carried that pistol,
deep in his pocket like the jingle of change.
But when he got out of Bridgeport his past sloughed off like dust,
like cornfield grit.
And he came walking from that place,
clean.

And as he walked, you were still a boy,
dying to know that I approved of you.