

## STATE PARK

I could almost believe I died back there  
on the hewn cedar bench where irate birds  
squawked overhead and an old man  
in a railroad cap muttered women's names  
in his sleep.

October leaves drop, browned warps  
bypassing primary colors. Other hikers  
don't speak. My presence here  
is not convincing. Cold and wind  
move through me without slowing.  
The earth doesn't accept my footprints,  
even unbeaten paths ignore my weight  
as dull sky denies me a shadow.

I slam into every cliché, a slalom novice,  
knocking over all the flags.  
A different nature preserve might  
be better, one less local, one  
with fancy facilities-- like a wide river  
with painted boats to cross it,  
not a pinched needy creek, little more  
than tears tracking south on a made-up face.

I see my feet. My hands dangle  
from coat sleeves. I propel  
clothing along. Abstractions swirling  
in my head approach the park gate.  
The exit gets closer. But I'm losing me  
with every step, scattering my humus  
on the trail as I walk, detritus  
of too many falls, all the good  
leached out, dirt-colored, no hint  
of what it was. Not quite dust.