

STILL FLYING THE JUNEAU ICEFIELD

Down there
has the look of silence, a mother lode
of loneliness. But I know
that Arctic leftover creaks under its sheets,
cracks louder than rifle shots.

Down there is untracked infinity. Cold
is a visible being, life support for glaciers
ringing the flats, keeping them hardy
enough to attack mountains, slough off
bergs the size of battleships.

Since you left me,
similes and metaphors gain weight daily,
sharpen on altitude and bleak beauty.
You took my life support with you.
I should have guessed something was stirring
molten red beneath your whiteness--
the same way, miles below sight, earth seethes.

On this surface, living is forgotten.
Under their granite scars the Nunataks groan,
patient chess pieces castling the corrugated board
where queens and pawns are lost.

Bush pilot bard, gabbling aloud and alone
like a snow goose: the only bird here,
my shadow-wings slide across crown-jeweled jags
as kings and bishops stand blue-gray watch.

And far beneath their reign over pale ruin,
an ancient glaring restlessness
ponders its own antithesis.