

Pawnee City Poems

I.

this last poor kiss  
the small white bandstand  
on the courthouse square  
screams in hopping leaves  
and flapping flaking paint  
"I am dying, Egypt, dying"  
etcetera

II.

drove down to Kansas for dinner  
gram&grandad bon&jim  
family and me  
had hamburger steak  
and creme de menthe sundaes  
that's gone now  
on the way back the slate hiway  
the headlights caught fireflies  
made the cornfields explode  
thousandfold

III.

World War II  
small town America  
my father's adolescent fantasies  
dusty roads fishing gram  
heavy in the kitchen  
freckles' cold nose and warm eyes  
grown old as I was born,  
cut adrift, children gone—  
trips down frightened me  
as a child,  
ichabod crane flights  
headlong from headless fields  
into the dark old farm town  
a warp of flame,  
fire like strawberry wine,  
could take the tinder town.  
It could be no less gone.  
—Scott Stewart



photo by Monte Gerlach

Snow

Silence slowly smothers cinders  
Neither noise nor nothing known  
Objects onward; offers, honors  
Where were we, wandering one?

Philt

To fill the void with something  
With something I have toyed  
Complete could mean but one thing  
To fill the void with void  
—Robert Brehm

photo by Dan Ladely



It makes no difference where I go  
There's just one thing that won't go  
slow—my mouth

Should I slip or fall on either ice or  
the snow  
Never fails there's disgust and it  
hollers "Oh no"—my mouth

The dictionary explains such words as  
poise  
Evidently it remembers more about  
noise—my mouth

There are just a few who can always  
be quiet  
The look I receive says "Why don't  
you tie it"—my mouth

I guess it does travel when it really  
should stop  
I've been told it's speedier than any  
top—my mouth

All our sports are such fun year after  
year  
I'd never deny it to stand up and  
cheer—my mouth

At times I feel it's been unfairly  
blamed  
But again I know it should have been  
tamed—my mouth

There is a day coming with no more  
to be said  
And I know you can guess it has to be  
dead—my mouth

—Phyllis Fosbender