From Country To The City, Wapato To Seattle (for my Brud-ur)

Traffic signs shiver, 
bats fly frenetically into the orange sodium lights. Stomping my feet, I write of the freeway entrance near the army base.

Miles from home 
I begin to count these words 
the warm breeze steals 
the matches light. 
I light a cigarette.

finger the braided hopsack necklace 
she gave me before I left 
feeling the coarse threads. 
I turn

to the oncoming traffic 
like a jacked deer 
listening to a pheasant squawk 
in a nearby field. And I wait for a ride.

—Earle Thompson

Ode

I walk to avoid him coming on me, 
removed, I stare at nothing. 
She is ubiquitous, yet to the side, 
you see her everywhere and look away. 
He is soiled, unshaven...wandering, 
removed, we see nothing. 
She grumbles, she groans, she pleas pence, 
I hear her everywhere and look away. 
From place to place coins pinch your pocket, 
removed, you feel nothing.

—Svensson Couch

Provider at the Globe Restaurant, Seattle

You have next, but have not. In a shell, the corners turn

behind you, breaking the string of hopes 
that could bring food for today, then a place to sleep, or

work for tomorrow... A place to stand! with everything in the future, the distance, on the hand closet.

This would be mine! I tell myself while I stand behind you, in this line behind a chosen door; working at the choice—at being

chosen for a job at hand. At working! This could be my own, at a distance.

—Stan Burriss