

D. NIELSEN

Sometimes When They Go We Travel

For a year after the "accident"
she carried *The Bell Jar* everywhere

"Get over it," they told her
and I too thought she was just
malingering enigmatically

I thought at twenty-two
to lose a brother in that way
(the sleeping bags rolled up side-by-side
a couple of beers and half a loaf
left open on the table
two fishing rods propped up by the screen door
then suddenly through the open window of the pickup
a rifle shoved in against his cheek
no explanation ever given)
I thought it was just another example
of the ugliness we must all learn to ignore
in order to go on

since then I have watched one of mine
cross over before her time
so I think I can at last detect
the eloquence of that gesture
carrying that suicide memo
was no obscure and self-indulgent plea
for pity from the living
but a signal, plain, brief and private:

*I can be with you in a few minutes if you like
a one-line note to a brother in another state:
I'll hop on a plane any time you need me*

Sometimes when they go
we travel such a long way with them
even across the border
and what looks to everyone else
like a few easy steps
can be an odyssey
back through freezing darkness
pulling, sucking us
out of time