

THE SURGEON

What does he think—his glittering
Blade poised over delicate tissue?
Does he mourn the breasts, or yearn
Momentarily to bend and kiss each one,
Searing her subconscious with a last
Moment of adoration, sealing it with phantom
Pleasure? Does he murmur, "Forgive me?"
Perhaps he thinks of his daughter's
Flat nipples like bronze pebbled coins
And sees in those before him
Her future.

 And the breasts, do they arch
Instinctively toward the knife as to a lover?
Does the sleeping torso twist
And pull away as in dream?

 The outer layer
Is soft, inside tough. Ducts like sinews cling
To muscles. It requires great strength
To tear them away, globbets of fat pop beneath fingers.

When it is done, when the nurses sit her up, unconscious,
Wrap the flattened chest with clean white gauze
Over thick pads where breasts were,
When the orderlies wheel her out and take
Her tissue to freeze for study or to burn,
Does the surgeon go then and weep?
Do his fingers tremble later
Touching his wife? Do they glide lightly
Over mounds of her flesh? Fearful each morning,
When he looks at himself, does he see there
The dark root of a scream?