

*Life Stories, & Other Possible Endings*  
Spring Valley, Nevada

(in the shape of a bristlecone pine tree)

The way at night  
as we eat and drink ... next to a river  
cool currents of air.. slide between us...as though someone has rolled  
down the window in a fast moving cloud... .. across the desert .. where you are town  
guide of abandoned mine sites... .. and trees alive from before Christ – their seedlings  
sprung about the time democracy started up in Greece... .. Everyone (except women &  
slaves) gathered in the amphitheater .. to cast votes .. a field of single hands raised... .. We  
are surprised .. to see small daubs ... of forest brushed by quick painterly strokes.. ..  
... Or like animals .. you say .. a herd of zebra or gazelle  
clustered... .. The lion.. no longer hungry...dozes sleepily at the edge of the lake.. ...  
while power lines rise in pairs .. their arms crossed one over the other .. range to range .. in a  
procession resembling Kachinas ... (the gods have assumed modern – though still  
electrifying – expression)... .. You press the final elements into ... the tail of the  
car...while like a puzzle  
I wander — a bit of a river rain – about the edges of ground ... where we've filled our  
heads with stars – *such a relief!* – next to the stream – where we've laved cold water ... ..  
on our freshly naked skin .. each morning after sleep....  
beneath the smooth and oddly human curves... .. of a pine struck by longing ... ..  
and apparently.. ..once upon a time, by lightning .. .. we say the little *thank*  
*you* prayer to montane life ... .

to twisted bristlecone  
and purple monkshood ..  
to yellow stream  
violet and the  
hardly startled  
doe we stumbled  
on. .. that first  
morning ...  
golden-mantled  
.. morning ... the way  
we used to do when we  
were a child – the last,  
the very last thing