

## Looking at a Picture In the Bangor Public Library

The shrike,  
Frugally rendered  
sits on a dead limb.  
It is the emptiness  
Within which the shrike and the limb  
Accommodate themselves  
To each other,  
To which I would draw your attention.

Framed within the library window  
I see a van pull to the curb of Harlow street.  
A boy of perhaps eight leaps out,  
His curly hair and dark physiognomy  
A heritage of many continents.  
Twirling his library book, he flutters  
To the steps  
Where he hops from one to another,  
Birdlike among the branches.  
He does not look up.  
My gaze, within which he now performs,  
Is an emptiness unknown to him.

He moves, arms flapping, toward the door.  
He will enter the library,  
And soon he may pass close to me,  
A dry limb, waiting.

Children do not walk.  
They hop on one foot  
They twirl,  
They balance precariously on their toes,  
And leap.  
They dance.  
They dance the  
Airplane in all its variations:  
The Helicopter, The Glider, The Bomber,  
(Cruel as a falcon.)  
They dance the Naked Indian Intent On His Prey  
The Bumblebee,  
The Dust devil On A Summer Afternoon.  
I have seen them in gaggles  
As they choreographed themselves  
Down sidewalks.  
And have seen them singly in malls,  
Dancing to songs,  
Of desire and renunciation,

But they do not walk --  
Not until school.

Walk, she said,  
Or you will lose your recess.  
My anger is sharp and hard as a bird's beak,  
And my song calculating and shrill.  
Between these lines I labor to create an emptiness  
--  
A space within which the boy might delay his dying.