It lay on the bare board of my deck, dead,
its four wings tensile as the thinnest glass.
I held it up to the world like a lens,
gripped between thumb and forefinger. Grass
shimmered, leaves went luminous. Threads
divided my field of vision like the leading
of a window. Some calligraphic script
glossed a world that trembled to be read.

Except that three inkblots on each wing
made twelve shadows on the rippled
light, twelve smudges smouldering,
as if the sun had blown the rods and cones
and left parts of the world encrypted,
unreadable as runes on alien stones.
All this it had always been shouldering,

Both clarity and opacity, on the hinge
of its body riding, even as it skimmed
the water and the deep lake brimmed
with hidden movement at the fringe
of vision. It could not know the sprocket
of its wings might gear up and estrange
the world, tumbling, kaleidoscopic.

Of this it could not have been aware.
Unless—once—tremulous in the air,
in the tandem ecstasy of the coupling flight—
its multifaceted eyes might have glimpsed
through the wings of its mate a fragile
universe engraved—everything rinsed
in sheer and shadowed, molten light
and multiplied beyond imagining.
To William Stafford

I am the one who hit the doe last night,
whose body you, following, would have
swerved to avoid. I had no time to veer
or brake, just that sudden thump, the brunt
of a blow that thrust my body to the side
in a brief displacement of steel and flesh,
and that fleeting face at my window, closed
at the mouth, the open eyes black marbles
meeting mine, knowing me, then gone.

You would pull over to the side.
In this you would not swerve.
In the glow of your taillights
you would take hold of her legs,
and lay the weight of your body
against her weight, and in the absence
of a canyon you would drag her
to the shoulder and into the ditch
beside the cornfield, conscious
of traffic to come and of the sinister
thrum of your impatient engine.

I limped home trembling to the guilty grate
and wheeze of tire on metal, my red Toyota
crumpled head to tail, the side-view mirror
smashed and hanging by the colored tendons
that once made it adjustable from within.
I travelled through a single swath of brightness
from one remaining headlight. And I thought
the two beams must have blinded her, as they
lit up for me a narrow strip of dark
but not the fields of stubble on either side.