

## Winter arrived

in central Oregon  
with an absorbent thud,  
from warm, sunny days

cold and cloudy  
snow in the wind,  
fifteen-degree nights.

Our electric furnace  
howls fiercely  
through nights,  
I ask again  
are engineers unusually inept?

If weapons of war were designed  
with as little attention to detail  
hardly anybody would be dead  
by now.

Me?  
My friend  
owns a red canoe.  
If he will loan it to me  
I'll fill my water bottle,  
pack my backpack,  
leave for the equator

You stay here  
tend winter's fire.

I launch my red canoe  
into the Deschutes river.

Currents and my paddle  
drive me down  
to the Columbia River  
and down the Columbia  
to the sea.

I turn left,  
paddle south.

Birds fly above me  
migrate south.

Ocean currents beneath me  
surge south.

Whales  
deep in the ocean  
below my red canoe  
deep in the water  
under me  
migrate south.

We all sing together  
birds, currents,  
prow of my canoe  
pushes water,  
seaweed  
loosened into winter current  
salt,  
millions of years of existence,  
aside,  
Sun above us all,  
whales,

We sing  
migrate south

cold days and nights  
descend north.

I hope to see you again  
some summer day.

If they have paper and pencils  
at the equator  
I paddle toward,  
I'll write you a letter  
and tell you where I am  
in my eternal journey  
toward natural warmth  
and light.