

## Many Letters Later

It's easier to send gifts:  
a postcard from Portland,  
used books, colored pencils  
and a sketchbook, a birthday  
card with an ugly cartoon  
baby crying on its cover.  
I walk the dog and pluck  
crimson from the trees.  
I walk until my feet ache  
and the dog's breath  
plumes white in the cold.  
It's harder to write letters  
which remind me I am free.  
The knowledge nests  
in my brain like a rook,  
pecking sharpest after  
too many whiskeys.  
Last week my brother  
turned 21 in prison.  
My parents tell me they  
had a good visit. I write.  
I don't tell him about  
visiting James in the hospital.  
I don't mention moving  
the last of my things  
from the house I shared  
with April. I know his week's  
been tougher than mine.  
I know we need so much  
more than we can give.