

Día de Los Muertos  
Seattle Rendition, Extraordinary, 2006  
October 17, 2008  
for Connie Marie Staudohar

At *La Familia* in Albuquerque  
I was explaining to Levi the ceremonial  
At *El Centro de la Raza* in Seattle.

There couldn't have been more than thirty of us  
Holding hands as we sat in a circle  
Around Halloween with jack o lantern smiles.

Some of the dead being remembered  
Left long ago and  
I can't remember if we said all of this  
Or just felt it so strongly the words gush out of me now  
Your husband who killed himself  
The day after being released from  
A bi-polar episode;  
My wife killed on her bicycle on Mother's Day  
Leaving me a teenager to raise by myself;  
Or our baby killed by abortion  
Before either of us were married to others...  
Levi graciously interrupted me  
As if that ceremonial remembrance of the dead  
Had been designed especially for us.

It unnerves me at times how casually I have come to call on death  
As an old [and dead] friend's poems preoccupy me  
Late at night in new digs on Blue Creek with bears for companions,  
I await my horses and the right equipment to fix my corral and barn.

We can't avoid death so we encapsulate it  
In poems set off from those about dancing and love:  
A casket, a body bag, an obituary,  
A cemetery with a fence to keep  
The dead from walking out before we're done with them, escaping  
Cremation fires leave ashes which still  
Crave containment lest they fly all over everything  
Contaminating the living with one more exit,  
Here's looking back at you  
Some say "Kid,"  
I say nobody's actually going alone.