

Killing Sam

A samoyed,
three years of walking him
down and back the dirt road
to the highway,

turning him loose in
the stony fields, in bright mornings
after snowfalls.

His circling a room,
finally coming to lie
at Anne's chair or mine.
His body warm against ankles.

Killed a spaniel on the next farm:
torn throat and belly, broke
loose from Sid and me,
mauled the corpse.

Sid's rifle in the barn,
us running. Came after us
barking fur and blood.

Shot him from the loft door,
surprised at the gun's jump,
surprised I hit him.

Kicked him onto a tarpaulin,
covered his soft blotched body
in the woods behind the barn,

threw both shovels back
into Sid's green tool-shed.

These last weeks Waif and Boxer
bore each other easily.

Anne and I watch
around corners, make no
sudden moves.

—Robert Billings