

On Red Mountain-- October 8, 1994 (Birmingham, Alabama)

On Red Mountain
I walk along the road cut:
the air smells wet and dark--
 of rain on the fallen leaves
the sky intoxicated with
 thick winter fog...
Throughout this day
I've worried about a friend,
 but now I am amid history
and
I crawl through the
 boundary fence
to walk alone on the sharp rocks.

Gradually,
 my fingers turn raspberry
with the powder of
scattered iron ore;
 my bare feet are black
from the shale
and fossilized stones
and when I finally
 stand still,
surrounded by
morning glories and golden rod,
I can visualize all
that happened long ago.

And the Mountain roars
with the hoarse cries
of hundreds of miners
and the clinks
of their picks
against the limestone
 and conglomerate
And though I know
that it is only an illusion,
the smoke from a long-deserted furnace
again fills the air--
fills my lungs
my heart and mind.

On Red Mountain
I stand spread eagle,
my feet melted into the ground;

Here I can feel
the wind and
smog-polluted
but beautifully purified
Rain.