Joshua Tree, California, April 10, 2004

MOJAVE CODES

Can lead you through a weather wall on a dry lake
   Sunshine on the left — rain on the right
While blue skies & a breeze take hard semantic turns
   Over muddy mirrors in washes dotted with pools
& wildflowers, out in acres after yesterday’s rain
   Make sweetness signs for the nose and the eyes

In the distance a chalky ridge points a finger to heaven
   Revealing its source of what cannot be snow
Off to the west a buffalo herd of volcanic rocks
   Runs a rainbow figure into an apron of dirt
& waves of heat vapor rise from the salt flat
   Telegraphing the event to clouds and birds

Semicolons crawl through bony sockets at my feet
   Busy in a bighorn skull long empty of sheep
Some other critter moved in & died before the ants came
   & unwrapped the meaning of moisture in flesh
Below them is an ungrammatical pothole
   & a cactus bud about to thank the rain

Jackrabbit, a tortoise, joshua trees on the plateau
   Fabulous fixings for mesquite tea talk
Nested in bottle caps & cans & other culture markers
   Dried out & preserved like sheep skulls
Commercials for Twenty Mule Team Borax soap
   & Frankie Lane songs about wild geese

Desert texts can make you remember Hansel & Gretel
   Heat stroke & a horse with no name
They can satisfy your thirst for knowledge
   & make you late for the dance of the dead
They can also make you sing, especially after a rain
   You just have to give them time