

## Early Autumn

Early autumn. Summer rains  
a month late and buckets short.  
Better last year's nothing at all,  
but the washes still not running,  
the runoff ponds still dry.

Even so, from the little we got  
the mountains have turned green again,  
the nights cool enough for a good sleep,  
the roadsides covered with yellow flowers  
whose names I knew back when.

All afternoon dragonflies and swallows  
dart through the air after insects that like the flowers  
seem to have popped up out of nowhere.  
As the sun sets behind scarlet tatters of cloud  
and a full moon, enormous and bloodred  
from wildfires rises out of the mountains,

buzzards come home to roost in the cottonwoods,  
slim-winged nighthawks careen through the sky  
and desert toads begin their love songs,  
like a gentle breeze from the southeast  
a memory passes behind my eyes of how  
those who are gone were when they were here.