

in printers' shops.
As a little girl
I wanted to have
more rainbow tablets than anybody.
We didn't have much money
so I used to stand
outside the windows of art stores
looking at those expensive blocks
of water color paper, the kind
you wet and lift with a razor.
Real class, to me, is still water color paper.

My husband complains
when we go on vacation
I pack half the bags with paper;
notebooks, sketchbooks ...
but I won't get caught in the sticks
without a tablet.
You should see my origami.
The lime is especially choice, and the red.
I've had this stash of origami papers
for years in the back of my desk,
in case of another world war.

Of course I discriminate.
Napkins, tissue -- these are so-so.
Wrapping paper's cute but dull.
Copy paper's bitter, squeaks
when you touch it, a modern
hysterical kind of paper I don't care for.
Kraft paper sacks are comfortable.
I've got a closetful.
Newsprint, lined and unlined,
has tooth and takes a soft pencil.

Often when going for something simple
like a magazine, or sandwich bags,
I find myself buying a ream
of 20 lb. bond I don't really need.
Those blank sheets in a good stiff box
turn me on. Doctor, I need to know,
am I normal?

BUS FARE

Today, when I was looking you up
in the phone book,
I saw the Greyhound number
and thought of when
the children were all babies

and I didn't have a car.
Sometimes on winter afternoons
when the babies were taking their naps,
I'd call the bus depot
and ask how much it cost
to get to different places
like Baltimore, or Atlanta, Ga.
It was \$68.50 one way to San Francisco,
forty bucks more if you came right back.
I almost called today
to see if the price had changed.
It was good to know
you didn't have to be rich
to get somewhere.

AMELIA

I am impressed by the story
of my mother-in-law's neighbor,
a lady named Amelia
who looks like a side of beef on wedgies.
Amelia has grey hair
and every other word she says is,
"goddammit."
Indoors and outdoors, she wears a mumu,
smokes Camels, carries a poodle.
On fine days, when windows are open,
you can hear Amelia cough
all over the neighborhood --
"goddammit this ... goddammit that."
She's outlived two husbands.
Here's the part that gets me.
When she ran off with the second one,
Amelia's first husband
drank prussic acid.
The neighbors say
she must be some woman.

-- Barbara Drake

Okemos MI

attic
box of
memoirs
pen tracks
on mildew

seen
a
caftan
of many
colors