

concentric

the most depressing place I've ever been is
THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE BEACHES OF JAMAICA
that gird the bare feet of the beggars, the homeless,
the desperate, who greet tourists with white smiles,
and promises of paradise

OR BOURBON STREET, on a September Wednesday
where there's cheap Mardi Gras beads, carnival masks,
and stale, sweaty breasts for sale—
and a feeling of nothing, everywhere
all the time

OR A NEIGHBOR'S INDOOR TAG SALE,
where I cross a perfect, flowered landscape to find paneled walls,
signs that mark rooms "nothing in here for sale,"
"all items in this room 50 cents,"
and sticky, warped Tupperware to hold the change collected

OR MY DRIVEWAY, near the street,
by the garbage I forget to roll out on Tuesdays,
the old newspapers, coffee grounds, potato peels
in the 90-gallon plastic barrel delivered like a present,
to its consistent, career collector

OR MY LIVING ROOM, flipping channels on satellite,
catching glimpses of waste in other worlds—
haggard troops in Afghanistan suffocating their wailing injured,
bloated bodies drowned by Ketsana in the Philippines,
the local teacher stabbed to death by one of her students

OR MY BED, reading magazines at night,
turning pages through *US News*, *Fortune*, *Time*—
billionaires sailing their yachts in Monaco,
movie stars counting their homes,
plastic people in perfect places or counterfeit people, anywhere,
with white smiles, promises of paradise.