

All the Old Songs

I never knew them all, just hummed
and thrummed my fingers with the radio,
driving four hundred miles to Austin.

I flew there when I could, without a song
for hours. Her arms were all I wanted.
Our boots kept time with fiddles

and the sobs of blondes, the whine
of steel guitars sliding us down
in deer-hide chairs when it was over.

Sad music's on my mind tonight in a jet
high over Dallas, earphones on channel five.
A lonely woman, dead, comes back to beg me,

swearing she's fair, rhymes set to music
which make complaints seem true. She's gone
and others like her, leaving their songs

to haunt us. Letting down through clouds,
I know what I'll find tonight at home,
the same old woman faithful to my arms

as she was that year in Austin when the world
seemed like a jukebox and our feet able
to dance forever, our pockets full of coins.

WALTER MCDONALD