

Myth
of
the
Sandbar

Poems

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Myth of the Sandbar

Over There

At the foot of the hill over
there I can see where
I used to be. It was like that, you
know, with
the T.V. on at night, summer
spilling those last glories of the vanishing
sun across an evening dark table—light
that does not behave like itself
anymore, turned from
invisible brightness into a
tissue-thin malaise
of color, the pastels of memory, a definition
for hue that hides
the things from before even in the word
itself.

You can't escape it.
Which is funny, and
perplexing. Because—
don't you see—it has already
passed.

i.

What Happened on Deep Cut Road?

What am I trying
to say? That there is a porch I drove past
the other night I have never seen before
but am certain I spent a lifetime
on? In the back of the old home
on Deep Cut Road,
like a dock at the edge of an empty dark black fresh tilled field
of ocean pushing itself out
so dangerously into the falling
most dim sky of the intrepid midwestern evening.
Simple two by fours
side by side by side without
even a basic rail to keep the most unbalanced as I from tumbling
lost into whatever earth there is for real. I know. I know
how one night I must have been drunk
to teeter so helpless at its edge
daring each earnest effort of the breeze to beg me
to join it. I had nothing
to lose, but what do we ever
wish that has not been asked
before and refused?
To sit one last time and dangle my feet past the edges
of poorly home
cut boards
for the invisible
thrill of imagining every place
that I am not.
I should have
driven my car past Deep Cut's shoulder
to risk drowning
in the field
and announce my arrival home. Home.
Home. What
creatures we are, so confused by desire, the simplest
of instincts, the clearest of intentions.
And if believing is only so easy as that, that we are captivated
by the thought
of each unhappened motion of being, there is barely anything
to remember at all.
It is a small collection
of photographs in a half
empty album. What does it matter
what actually happened?
I am on the porch with you at the end of my life, and we
will talk deep into the night of all the people
we'd forgotten we knew.
I barely utter a word.

Fish

I am four years old/and holding a fish/by the mouth, knee/deep at the edge
of a lake near the Dells. Sharp teeth/prick my thumb/and I want now/at 23
to give the fish/to a friend who awaits my call. He might/find it obscure
to hold a fish, caress/its scales and sleep/with it all night/so in the morning
he must shower twice/just to escape/the thought of the smell. "Take it"/I will say
"It's yours from me./Say nothing. I will/understand." I will want to explain
that she said early on/she is afraid of fish. I fear nothing I told her/but heights and
the dark. He is scared/to think of touching it/but he will joy in the moment
it is forbidden/and will eat even the eyes/as they do in some places. Take this—
its tail will point/to the future always, give/you some place to follow/to escape
the faithless, which I have tried/but cannot. It will/come on its own, her fear
was bought/long ago./We all take/our chances. He will loathe/its pleasure
even save the teeth/so I will have something/to remember./They have been with
me some time./He will even ask/about the photograph/not realizing—*he could
not have known.*/And he will begin/to understand: we'll take/what the water gives,
even when haunted.

Notes on being here

Tonight it's the bones that hurt, given their attachments to things on the outside,
which they should never come to know on their own, but do. This is the nature
of things. That the stars in their lazy constance seem

so impossibly far

away in the darkest

blur of blue air going on itself until it reaches them.

Its actualness redeeming everything occurrence
of all time, the truth of it
keeping you from doing anything, the sadness moving you
into the only satisfaction of love.

So maybe the bones are only feeling because they, being bones, are unafraid to know.

She once said.

"If that way is north,
then the ocean is crooked."

And still seems as great a truth as any.

The Midwestern Morning Unraveled

The window

in the bathroom of our upstairs apartment
where the cats sit sometimes when it's warm enough
for the glass pane pushed open. It was,

the other morning,

first day in June and the cats
were at lounge on the ledge

and I was brushing my teeth.

Water out the faucet, the cap

nearly rolling down

the drain, the radio

in the other room, sun
on the floor and one cat

jumping down behind

me. And in the next mouth of wind:

the universe slipping whole

through the open square

of house, pouring in like music

of history released from atoms

of air what we know is out there

but forget, everything

preceding and after

the dying. What brought it I can't say

the impossibly simple incantations

of routine? Accidental magic

unaware of modern skeptics?

The call of tap water
to distant ancestors? I

and my mint taste rushed

to the window to seek

every answer, at last. But found nothing

to see, except for the lawn

furniture on the other side

of the lilacs next door.

That was new, evidence

the neighbors are preparing

for summer and how they will wait

out the wait,

its longlate gently passing

days .

The Front Window

I've tried to lay these things to rest outside of the front window,
in the grass, or what I should say correctly was the grass, now is just the dirt
that became the grass. I laid them down like a plant left
to grow, these things

a hoe or a rake, a book
with pages or matches,
a book ripe and fat
with scribbles or flint
and paper or a heavy
type with looming letters
like rooks and chapels.

A pair of glasses that I must stop from wearing has been planted
beneath the impatiens, near the ferns, in rows of piled dirt,
just in view of the wide broadened window flush with the brick
along the front of my sad uncle's home. The front window opens
out over the lush drifting mounds of Michigan sand and gives
view to the lake that his grandfather's father's uncle's father came up
on the first time with little warning except for what he'd heard
on the cool wind that shuffled itself across the land like a dull flat
pencil slipping over paper, the lead easing a trail behind it, the erosion
of sentences into words. I saw from the window

a set of unfamiliar spectacles beside a pair of sandals, left
just short of the wet sand of high tide. He tells me, you
told me, that you left them there the other day. The other day,
you say, as if there were only two from which to choose.

Far below the front window, all the way down, past the roots and riverbeds and
the deep black tidelines underneath the sand, past the Safeway and beside
the A & P, the watermelon depot is, is not even a building, and they are barely
words they hold together so poorly. A large cardboard box filled chest high
with ripe and ribbed green, egg long, large and tempting melons. I am juggling
them. Four at a time. I am taking a fifth balanced onto my foot by a quiet labored
passing rural folk, a proud sunken man and kicking it up like a stone into
the curve of the back of my neck. The others remain in air, suspended. Take one. I

have been led to believe they are free. They're here aren't they? I have barely room for one in my refrigerator, not for lack of space God knows, certainly, I am starving but because the shelves have been placed far too close together for a melon of this size to sit in comfort.

One melon speaks, we would be just
as happy to be left alone. So instead

sit with me in the bare blacktop of the grocery mart to ask questions about the meaning of things, ourselves. They say today there is nearly 100 percent humidity, as if a few more points would send us into a countywide flood, gushing water from the pores of the air, enough to fill this lot past our necks. It does not seem hot enough. Meaning, I say, meaning. I say, we are here and you say that is not enough and anyway has nothing to do with meaning. I say, who is to say? We know, however, that you are right as rain. A warm shower, pellets round as golf balls, naked, unaware of their own desires. As long as we are speaking, you say, you must admit that you want to love her, entirely, with so little doubt that you could barely slip a sheet of paper between the wall and door of uncertainty, if it is a room at all. What room, I say, man, I see no room? This is a lot with cars and yellow lines and a box of watermelon at its border. How is this love? I ask. What does love have to do with? You ask. Is it

rings or sex or ass
or sunrise and conversation
poetry? lips, tongue? hair? churches,
dances, drinks? baths, dinners? promise,
dying, sleeping? fingers in hands or
pressed against windows?

On the bench beneath the front window sit a man and a woman, the woman in wire spectacles and the man in sandals, and they do not see me watching them. If they did, I'm sure, they would not have kissed like that. Like two particles of earth joined at last in the place where continents come together. Like two bugs in mud. Like all thought caught in flood. The air is thick with water and the wind.

ii.

the vanishing

something is happening,
i tell you. the children are
making new plans for the womb.
i am driving
alone; i am trying to make it
home in time, but the time is growing old.
it is a body covered
in rust, dark
and orange. it moves with an ache
in its stomach, a pain that seeps
into the thighs and flares
between ribs. the rust is growing
like a honeycomb. something is
everywhere. streets are slipping
into manholes. porches and homes
melt like wax
in the summer fire. blackboards
suck the classrooms in
like drains and the desks are left
alone. we are all shadows, a premonition
of what has been.
we were a likely story.
we have told them well. i have
heard them all. i have heard
the days to come whisper
while walking beside a power
plant at one a.m.,
never knowing
that's what it was,
but hearing the steam
gush and seeing the hot moist
clouds unwind from the roof,
taking long steps under the orange
light and phantom drizzle —looking
for apartment 32 at the corner
of First and Armory somewhere
there, the days to come were so
nearby. what was that i saw.
something in the late
drunk walk home.
something that said. less

than reading, less than the stark
wordfits of conversation, this is
what tells me—
we are what's missing.
i remember when.

i remember you
were just a figment in the spring
in Urbana. outside on the cement
steps of the amphitheater, the evening
beginning and your white ceramic
hands around a cup, still at first and then
acquiring a shiver. the imperfection,
they were only fingers, that was all.
we talked, you
said "i knew here, this would be
a good place." it was
a radiant place. it kept on
and we didn't want
to leave, but did. what difference
does it make to stay. i am beginning
to remember. i remember
watching people drive away, never
to be seen again. i am sure they were
consumed. it is what's happening. i fight
to remain. there is little
left. we are alone
in the dim city. a truck eclipsed
the moon and i can hear the children
crying in the trailer. my hands are on the wheel.
they are only children, they will not
know any better. they do not have
to know that they are only bone
and flesh and i am
just a man.
i am just not even
a man trapped in the flatlands
listening to
the radio buzz
about the loss
of amphibian lives. static kicks in
like a wind, blows in
like the breath of women

on my neck, growls
out like animal thoughts
that i struggle to understand. the engine
grumbles, it grinds like an undertow
underneath
the radio. it begs. why go home? i have
gone home before, gotten stoned
one more time
by the T.V. thinking this time
i will make it
all the way to bed
somehow, this time,
and slept then,
again, on the couch. what else
should we do?

birdsong drains
the night and wet fleshy
air clings thick
to the windshield
while dawn creeps out like rust
over the vanishing land. morning
reveals. even the hunters
have scattered, leaving
the kill behind on the forest
floor, wrapped in stained linen. the blood
is sticky, like honey. it exits the white
bundles like rivers on maps stagger
toward larger water. we wait
to see. we eat
donuts and coffee, shift
the weight of being
tired from one leaning limb
to another. i see
my arm as a wrestling thread
unwound to measure distance
from the places i will be.
it grows short. i stare
at the clock. the rear mirror
grows full with the approach
of a car and i see, one
has returned. we rejoice
at the theft of an absence. we watch

it disappear before our eyes, like a leaf
burns from the edges in. leaves burn
all the time
these days. we notice
them in piles, they are
hiding something.
they are more
than fires. i once left burning
embers aside in the Wisconsin woods
to step out into an open
field beneath a vast tripping
dark sky. there was a meteor
shower to see. i laid
on my back all night beside
my sister in the cool grass
to point, "there, did you
see? there. there." they all came down.
the whole sky
began to fall. the autumn
was upon us. the leaves
of memory, of some seasons, buried
us in piles, colored—washed
us in drained green,
scrubbed us out
like a stain. brought us here
to this highway in the valley where

the fog has come
in. the world has closed
itself like a department store.
the man at the door waits
for us to go. he touches
his face as if to say, "take
what you can." they are saying
that always now, the ones
like him, the salesmen, the mistresses,
the priests. the wrinkled man
and his slack jaw. the thick
hand that rose
from his waist and came to rest
on the bones of his cheek. the fingers
took a short time feeling
the age and his white hair

caught fire like mist. it all seems so
long ago. i am driving alone, between
autumn fields drawn empty
of the corn, left
in the half-husks and dry dirt. i am
on the road. i am shooting
gazes past the turnpike
oasis, tracing the cracked earth
of the Mississippi flood
plain, drooling
on the shapely female
mudflap, missing lovers i have
never had. they have all
looked so good
i could eat them. i should have
had them all. when i was 21
i saw the figure of
a woman standing
on the basement floor
of Gregory Hall, her short red hair and black
tights over thin firm
legs, shirt dipping in back and the way
she shifted—gently moving
her stance from one foot
to the other, leaning just
over to where
I brushed by her shoulder
from behind and never saw
her, but felt lust,
at 21, the way lust feels then. where
has she gone?
who is her lover now? where has she
been these
days. these days
the plaster drops

from the ceilings of rooms where i
used to live. shadows
of the vacant
buildings lose their weight
in fog. i had haircuts there. made
love. ate. laced
shoes while smoking cigarettes outside

on the porch in winter, when it was
too cold to be
smoking, where the feet of strangers,
friends left marks in the snow
when they were here before.
the prints are gone,
the snow is waiting
somewhere to return
and i am heading it off in the season
before. i am going
there now. to nowhere
for certain where no one
may be waiting. the relatives
have stole the house dry. the blood
of the roadkill sticks to my tires and i leave
a trail of the visible
dead. i remember what i see
until it leaves. we all grow tired
before we are old. we are all ghosts,
memories of the things we've forgotten
to do. even the oceans are forgetting.
i try to remember so much
for them. i remember sitting
along the Atlantic, on the sands
of Assateague Island below the full
cherry moon before
the fog came. the sand grew ripples
in the wind and tiny grains
slapped hard and bare on the tan

ankles that i pushed through
the foam to wade into
the waves. reflections of
the light ran long
and narrow reams
of white across the oceantop, bobbing
and sinking into
the deep, blue black. the eyes
of unmet women, the hands
of strong dead men, the bare
feet of children all drug along
the current, drew out
in tides. the blood of

the missing poured
into the seas. i left
the shore, slept
in a tent beside the gusts and dreamed
of home, its warm shower and vacuumed
carpet.

i am driving alone and trying
to return to the sea.
the ocean is a shadow
in my head. my mind is adrift. the road
vanishes behind me like the moon
changes shape when no one is watching.
only the hunters are heard,
calling to their wives.
the highway is adrift in the autumn
air. wind rattles
through the open windows
of my car, the sound
keeps me awake, keeps the car from being
buried in the red yellow
leaves. it rushes through my hair,
reminds me.
like light through amber, the rust
unfolds. a body falling
still in its limbs, the time
is growing old.

iii.

Death of a Die Cast

Eddie lost a finger there, which sounds terrible, but there's a whole collection of local farmers and machine workers missing digits and various parts. Mr. Sowinski from Greenwood goes without an entire arm caught once in a farming implement, and Eddie will tell you over beers at the White House tavern next door to nothing that he's just glad he's not Jerome, whose hand was snapped clear off at the wrist—blames a hangover and the fuzzy 8 a.m. brain that didn't see it coming. Neither one has worked in four years since they broke the union and closed the die cast plant between Clay Street and the railroad, removing its smoke black patch from the local quilt, sending orders for auto parts to other places—sucking out pressed metal from different machines and strangers' hands. Now, finally, the plant is coming down. Dismantled into dust and pieces by creatures built for destruction. County paper headlines read: "The Death of a Die Cast" but the die cast died four years ago. This is just the final vanish of an empty building, dark history collected into piles on a concrete foundation. It's taken nearly two weeks to tumble the brick and shatter broken windows into the pieces of infinitely small thought mixing with back hoe exhaust and local mourners' curious stares. Between the borders of chain link (no trespassing) broken beams and mortar tower in pyramid mounds like the residue of time waiting for a dust pan. From the flat Clay Street vista where the sidewalk trees lean into every new nothing, you can see now all the way across a broad empty space, beyond ghosts, to silver cylinders of the grain elevator on Short Street, the back side of the depot, the water tower, even the steeple of St. Mary's Church now rises out from the other side of the bare, revealing Mary's mosaic to a row of old homes that have never looked west to see anything like this. Ten years ago Jerome had taken Friday off to walk his daughter down St. Mary's aisle with his empty arm. And under his suit he wore short sleeves because he really blamed the shirt, the cloth of its flapping cuff refusing to tear free from the press, like it should, like he always thought it would have. But the truth of it is—it's the nature of fabric to be unpredictable, to refuse what it knows, without understanding.

3 a.m. in the bed of dying lovers

“How long
have you been watching me?” she asks. The night
continues
like a late bird lost in the world
for those for whom the night
has not yet stopped.

“Not long,” with a hand across her bare
stomach, feeling the human cloth
of dying skin. In the city
street the fresh
from college shine their gin
buzz with late negotiations, swept
into the yellow lamplight by unpale
unexpected joy—
I can't believe you said that. “There's a glass

of water on the nightstand,”
he points with his eyes,
“Are you okay?” And she lifts
her head like a slow dinosaur, siren
lights spin red
blue in the window,
warp color through
the sitting water.

And what did he think?
How many more nights?
Should I hold the glass for her? And someone
punches a clock: break
time, third shift. But she manages
the glass herself,
thin fingers cooled
around the small memory
of ocean remaining.

“What will we do?”
she asks as a moth flutters caught
between the window and screen.

common living

What can we say.
We sit together on the steps.
We smoke. We fish through receipts in our pockets, like crabs on the sea floor

dig. You say this is how we find our way
out. I have never been there. I cannot know, but I like the ocean
in that metaphor. I like to find water.
I like the ocean anywhere. In the shower
I lay my head on my back and drown. I can stand
beneath the stream until it goes

cold, until I'm stoned,
until the day has gone again. It is frequent
in its return. Another comes
like the way we wait for mail.
On a Sunday we are lucky
not to exist, except for our encounter with the man at the gas station.

He's not sure we are
there, that it's only rumor.
We are all uncertain. He slips

packs of cigarettes into rows above his head. I lean
on the counter, slip my hand
into the change tray and offer this,
"You can come too. We're going, you know. We're on our way
out." He shrugs funny—trapped
in a little glass booth. There is no way out
of here, he says. In time we forget we are

trying. He reminded me
of your dream, tell them, the one with the long and flesh-colored fish.
The way it was waiting.
The way it stood on its tail and said it was dying.
Handed me a camera, take my picture, he said, let me
say goodbye on film. I say
it was trying to get back to the ocean,
but they'll think you were the fish. It meant
you needed to go, that's what they'll say. The world is
cruel to the sea, keeps it
off the land—it has too much to give.

I like to imagine when the water covered it all. I imagine standing
in a place where rivers came together. I imagine everything
in the distance. I imagine all the time there was to go. The sound of change
in the water—a still rattle in the current.

You're dreaming, you say, that's where
fish belong, that's why they're there. We, instead, of course,

are here. You are dressing in front of the window with the shade
half down. I am in the shower, on my back, letting
the water pool
on my stomach. We are going somewhere
tonight. You will look beautiful. I will wait
for you outside, bring your keys, lock the house. I will stand with one foot in the car,
door open, hand on the roof and head turned towards you walking
down the steps of the porch.

What can we say.

We drive along the streets. We notice the signs.

We sift through the ashtray for change,

we keep driving—like an empty shell tumbles

along the bottom of the ocean, between other shells and through plumes of sand.

Degrees

CHICAGO, IL / JULY, 1995 – It is the summer of the heat, here, across the Midwest, among the farms, the cities, along the lakefront, up and down the Mississippi. The sun pours out over the plains, each state a searing trinket on a charm bracelet pressed hard into the flat land with an iron brand. You can see the smoke rising from the dirt. The world swoons.

Today I keep an eye on the news. The elderly dying by the dozens, found like pieces in a brick museum, discovered alone in the tall buildings of a scorching city. Each room filled with the exhaust of living, steaming out the souls through the seams of the paintstuck windows, each apartment and its being piled on top of the others like days on end. I look up as I flee through the streets and watch the stories of thought, several forgotten minds doused in time, watch as they lift up into the wind, leaving the empties everywhere, bottles to be recycled, beds to be changed.

The work of the wrecking crews is next, to move this out of the way, to try and get this right the next time. The careless heat of the afternoon is making space for what is to follow. Shadows driven straight into the ground. Wide fields and their far lost edges—grain to corn to soy to a boisterous patch of trees—all become like oceans of the great flood; 40 days of sun have pushed their dead green echoes past the easy peaks of all the low empty hills of the middle of America. They say we are living poetry, that all is surely lost, that the fever is upon us. It is the fever of the insane, the reckless, like the Cuban rockeros—young and lost—injecting AIDS into their veins for the thrill of dying, the waves of the self-inflicted mad washing into the waterways of the world, the seeds of the fever are everywhere. How many degrees will it take?

I am waiting for the sweat to break, to stay on into the night and review what has been left, to be the beginning of the generations to come. Some of us, the survivors, gather together under the canopy of an abandoned gas station; we have followed the tracks of those who fled. We are beside a single empty two lane highway, we are in the middle of nothing, the very center of the forever broad rich dry land with the granite sheets of heat ripping down through the air around us like anchors clamoring through the unwashed sea and slamming with the weight of whales into the rocky sand floor. We pick at the dirt, try not to move, pay close attention to each drop of sweat leaving the forehead.

We talk of what we will do when we return. One old man speaks of the house he will rewire, how he will take wrapped colored lines of the electric and set them again so the sockets filled with fans will keep the degrees next time an arms length away from the death he just escaped when the fuses blew. One man talks of the woman he will marry, how this time he will do it for love and keep free of the longing from which the heat has unchained him. One man asks of my plan, but I am not yet ready to reveal, I leave it buried and try not to let it seep out in the sweat. I will keep this fever at bay.

And as the sun finally stumbles down, clawing hard at the sky, dragging deep into the backs of the hills, falling lower like a bucket heavy with the day's souls, the old man ebbs forward like water under some limp spell and stares deeply into the now drooping wide orange unblinking eye of the sun. *Just like August in Nagasaki*, he says and the bare wind scuttles by — a few small voices etched into the breeze.

In the night I am alone. The rest returning in a flurry after sundown, joining small gangs of the faithful along the empty roadway.

The moon is full and cool. Its simple whiteness unfurled over the dark land like a flock of arctic terns arriving finally from their long journey across the length of the world.

I stand beneath the gas station canopy and peer out over the pastures. The moonshine splashed across the grass, leaning along the spotted sides of the still cows. It is a black and white world.

It is a matter of reflection. I look for mine in the window of the locked gas station door, above the handle marked PULL. I see in the glass the fields and hills behind me, study them like the photograph of a stranger, see myself riding out of the field and onto the highway. Riding with her at night on the way home, looking over her sleeping figure, her gentle unmoving arms, her open hand at rest.

I see myself returning to the world along the road at dawn, driving beneath the deep tunnel of an overpass, watching as the pigeons flutter & divide in a sudden set of motions below the concrete bridge — dart, scatter and rise out into the quiet air, like a conversation caught in the current of a quickening river.

Before the Body or After

I do not live yet on the West Coast.
Bordered in thought by mountains and ocean, the roads
in the valleys leading through the vineyards of Sonoma. I am unchanged
by the sounds of eastward waters charging like ancient creatures
into the wise cliffs of the western shore. There awaits
a foreign air whose poets I consume lately in preparation. Even now
I am called in my sleep to an enormous coastal vista overcome
in fog by its own grand size—an idea forgotten
in its attempt to wait out time. I worry that what will change
me I have already encountered, but misplaced. The last sight
of melted snow beneath the porch where shadow is
always on its back, despite the late angles of the sun. Spring wind
in gusts with a spray of March rain through the screen
like the premature notion of a squall
over the starboard rail on a vessel deep
into the wave-ridden plains of the Pacific.

This morning I walked the streets of the Midwest to the corner
of Todd and Clay for something from the store. It was gray.
There were puddles with dirt filling potholes, a woman
was using the pay phone for regular conversation, I carried coffee
in one hand and the book of a west coast poet in the other.
Spring's innards were laid out for everyone
to see: April mud in unpaved driveway, bare trees
pitching tiny buds to each furthest edge of thin limb, damp
wind. And I knew that if I walked all the way out of town, westward,
I would find nothing to hide the mountains
but hundreds of miles of wet lazy earth still at rest, still waiting
to offer its stalks—for all the effort it will be, to make something new
again. It requires a winter and the April may still give us snow.

So we, in the middle of America, continue the wait. I listen
carefully as the wind rattles the doors in muffled percussion
song. Melissa called with word from the radio this morning,
Allen Ginsberg has died somewhere out there. I look
through the kitchen window and can only imagine
the black and white photograph from the restaurant
in San Rafael: "Golden Gate Bridge, Unfinished, April 1935, Facing Marin."
The incomplete beams and wires hanging, roadless, like a ribcage
empty unable to know if it has arrived before the body
or after. What we write. Where we are.

Nightfruit

I am longing
in the night. Something taken
from sleep here in all
of the dark
and found. In an orange. Standing almost naked
over cutting board flatness
like bare land
on the kitchen counter. A navel
revealed with a turn.
Four dripping wedges
fruit, thirst near
succumbed by sight of the thought
of gnashing simple teeth through
tiny graped flesh. My words
lose me at first touch
of textured peel. Cut
half. And half again. And again until I am
divided into wanting
and wanting more. And being
nowhere at once. Then,
when the refrigerator was empty.
Now, with its robust offerings,
everything to be had.

Then, Kim had wanted me to hope the truth could be
eaten was a letter
waiting to be opened in a hip pocket promising
to be poetry when it got there.
I must have carried
it for days, wishing
the same and now
forget what was discovered
by finding the right moment to swallow its message. The moment,
especially, will never be
remembered. All of
the memory is in the waiting.
And later I wrote to her saying my now
here is your now
here, even at different times, but only briefly,

as you read this too,
but goes, the same.
Since then, everything
has changed.

And the phone won't ring
now, so late, in the middle
of an orange,
but it will, eventually,
and the orange will be an empty harvested
peel. And you will write a letter
on that day too
when it comes and magic will make nothing
whole that has already been separated
by its own
consumption or creation. Time
is pulling. The night is changed
only by what waits at each end. I move
not a bare foot from the warping
floor beneath. It is where I am standing
holding fruit for thirst, its wet surface exposed
for the first time to the night. It knows
what I know.

That the philodendron shoots
hanging from glasses above the doorways
are making their first roots, slipping
out tiny mouths,
slender earthward fingers
gently washing into the forever old water.

iv.

In Bloom: two letters

November, 1992. Dear Rod, Remember
when I told you
about the book of poems
I'd send to you
written by a mother
of a friend from church. Well,
finally, the friend gave me
the book to give to you
(she wouldn't let me buy
it) and it is on the way
under separate cover.

September, 1971. Dear Rodney, My father
Great-Great Grandpa Theodore Helm

Well, our garden is all gone
and green tomatoes are still
ripening in the basement
(18 quarts). The Dahlias are still
in bloom, but we're going to have
to take up their bulbs. We
have other flowers in bloom,
but not many. Well, how is

gave this silver dollar to me on my
50th birthday, October 12, 1939. I

everything coming along with your
work and future plans? We had a nice
talk with Daughn
and she invited
us for Thanksgiving. It will
be nice to be there. We haven't been
at their home
since Abbe graduated. About

always kept it for a keepsake.

one and a half weeks ago
we had to go
to a funeral in Whitehall and on our way
home stopped to see
Mrs. Groos. We had a nice
visit with her. She seemed glad
that we had stopped. She is
a delightful person. We had snow

So now I'm giving it to you, my Great-Grandson
on his Christening day to remember

flurries, but only
a few. Today
was quite chilly, still the sun
was out. We had to go
to a meeting at church
then visited a dear
lady who is 99. She
is amazing and we

me. With lots of love with it, Great-
Grandma Anna Van Riper

love her. Tomorrow is another
busy day ahead
for us. If you have time
and would like to send
a thank you to the lady
who gave me the book
for you, the address
is enclosed. Hope you
enjoy reading
some of the poems. Love
You, Grandpa & Grandma

Things Forgotten

One.

It is perfectly quiet in the sanctuary. And dark. And my grandmother tells us what my wife and I might see in this chapel if we could find the lights—that the sanctuary might be lit for witnesses. But more is revealed in its darkness—her figure, unblooming, slipping back through the seasons, arriving again as an object of yearning—a gentle stalk of youth. A new woman in her simple satin gown and veil, when she stood here more than a half century ago in the sun that unraveled through the stained glass to reveal a bride untouched by the weathers of age and death and the uncertain. And beyond that, to the child, the girl hand-in-hand with Sunday schoolers, elders and clergy, walking in to christen this sanctuary on its first day unmasked for the believers. Here they built a new church and everything would follow. One day, she would ride in the rear seat of her father's first car (the new '41 Chevrolet) knotting fingers with her groom while a sister drove in fits and the church doors swung into view around the corner. And once I would stand in its darkness on a day that held out the promise of rain. I would look into the shadows of the room. I would walk into the sanctuary, nearly blind.

Two.

It is not yet my day to grow old. It may never be. Things happen. Patience may get you there or it may not. Women will promise to make love to you, and then they may not. These are the facts. Live with them. Beyond that, all else is possibility. When you take, as we have, the accidental path, it is to admit that all possibility reigns over the known like a tyrant of hope—handing love to the random, death to the undeserving. But it is all we have, that either may happen. This

or that—the last or the next, which day
is it? It was the day I observed that of all
the flowers my wife and I planted in the early
sandy soil of our small yard, only the poppies
grew. It was our first garden. It was about the same time
strawberries were in season and we spent
the evenings after work picking the best ones from the bowl
and praying for sweetness in each
bite. Then, for a while, every day brought new orange
flowers, and sugary berries filled the drawer
of our refrigerator. And each day, we were
older, and it seemed fine then.

Three.

When we return from the church, my grandparents take us through
their garden. It is large, full with the promise of what
may grow this year and what may not. It occupies
the space between now and where life may end, which
is what flowers do for themselves and others. When
we plant things, they become their own—like a letter to another
world in which single words left on the page
arrive in other hands as sentences. They will
mean what they mean, our intent is only in
the seeds. They say this is what they intended to bring
into their yard: dahlias, zinnias and their daisy
colors, marigolds, daisies themselves, red
geraniums, petunias, impatiens, tiger lilies in
stripes beside the Easter lilies drenched
white, begonias, mums, squash, tomatoes, wax and green
beans, eggplant, corn, pumpkins, peapods,
lettuce, black-eyed susans. And finally, in rows to the side behind
the compost, grandfather's canas with its thick tall stalks and broad
heavy leaves—some deep purple, others lush green—humble
and grand and now beyond the days of the season when it once offered
a single bloom. The next flower waits for
another year. But there is something else. I find out
later, more mums were planted after we
left. Bloomed out of season, in August. My
grandmother, on the phone, is impressed by this, but
not amazed. It happens sometimes. And I keep a
leaf from the tansy herb that my grandfather
snapped off for me to smell. I am not sure why. I slipped
it into the pages of a book I don't

remember. But it is there, flat and pressed and probably without scent, waiting for another time.

Four.

Before walking through the garden, the drive home from the chapel unwinds unexpectedly into a visit of events in the immeasurable past. Days in the buzz of Muskegon saw mills and work done with clenched heavy hands. Weeks that ended at the white beach where Lake Michigan writhes onto the shore with such flawless motion that it must not know how many times it has done this before. It cannot know how long it has been since the summer evenings first laid themselves out—the warm, humid carpet beneath the stories that we hear. The beach leads us inland down the street a few miles to Pinchtown and the narrow lane of Nolan Alley where my grandfather pulled a sled to the gully behind the house and cascaded down the snow to Ruddiman's Creek. Free of lumber in the winter, the creek was heavy with ice then—frozen sailing for a sled after screaming down through thick woods of a riverbank. What young hollers echoed through the trees? Who did they mean to be later on? Who could've known that house would still stand to keep the lives of strangers when the alley has become a place undesired, a pock-marked secret? What was the weather a few blocks away on a day even years before those sleds—when my grandfather's great-uncles, angular, Dutch-stern, wiry-armed carpenters, raised the walls of a neighborhood and proudly called the street after their own: Wilcox Avenue. Now on the map of the world, but really forgotten. I may someday be the only one left who knows. And then no one.

Five.

There is the matter of water in my life, and what it knows about me that I do not. Maybe everything. It knows enough to keep returning me to it—in dreams, in the creeks through the forests of the mountain behind my home, in the ocean that I hear even when I am not near it. Water finds us all, then leaves before we knew what it meant to say. But we will try to hold it in our hands, as if to recapture the clear, cool

essence of a million recycled thoughts before careening
out of view, down the river. I found Van Wyck Creek near
its top where the long cascade of a rock-run descent
begins in earnest down the mountainside. Fed in the spring full
as it will be, with three months rain like wind fills the
air when air fills the sky and all of it must
move on or be lost. It is a pleasure to be found
by something and told by its mere presence too that
you are here. Water does this. It says I
am permanent (it lies) and keeps us in
its memory (it wishes) and if it did forget it would
not matter, because it always knew us. Even before
we were here.

Six.

In the morning, while we sat in my grandparents' kitchen, before
the day began, I imagine that the sanctuary was already quiet and
dark. As we ate breakfast unearthly silence hung
over the altar, awaiting no one, peaceful
and empty. Nothing happened there and no
one knew. I knew my grandfather retired years
before and earlier worried over rent and before that weighed the rest
of his life on a scale that bore out what love was worth. And once,
together, they thought to have a garden. Once they made
love and I was nothing and no one knew. And later, one
morning, we arrived in the unlit chapel where
it had been empty, and whatever happened in our absence
was forgotten or simply went unknown. "Was it here that you
kneeled?" I asked, pointing to a spot in the shadows, hoping for
the image of a bride and groom. She did not hear me and the
words slipped off into the dark.

The Question

You should know. That I heard
you. I knew what
you were saying about
women, about how
women had become, about you.

And when you thought
I wasn't listening, because I pointed to the mountain
out the window of the car, it was
the opposite it was because
I heard. It was the mountain

speaking. It was the clouds turned
to mist leaking out between
the trees until its peak
had even been
obscured. It was answering

my question from the day
before: what is inside
the mountain? You were
answering my question
from the day
we married: why do I love

you? It was telling how the
earth can grow from the ground
unafraid to be hidden by the sinking
air when the mountain considers

rain. It was conversation in a tail
of white plume fog wrapped around a body
massive in its capacity for
green. It was so loud.

That I could not help myself.

But could not explain. What it is
about a voice that makes itself
heard when all it is
doing is speaking.

How many times
should we think
the mountain has answered
the question before?

The Hunt

I failed today to do anything
I intended. And yet still
here. Where else
but life can you refuse
to participate, yet still be
included? Even right
now, that bird
cuckled in just
such a way that I could be
seven again alone in the woods, dodging
speckled shadows of the late feathering
light, descended through the withered
leaves of those grand oaks. Remind me
again, what did we do
to get here? I keep wracking
my brain for it, looking for that
memory of the beginning. Which doesn't explain
why death keeps
ambling in. Like the small bird,
a wren, that has dropped
onto the roof before me. Splashing
its wrinkled twig legs in the puddle where
the dry leaves soak
themselves into oblivion. Tiny prattle
of bird hops on water brings
Emily's feline nerves to attention. Tail
sways, soft black plume for balance if hunger
chooses to consume. Absurd,
all the rampant beauty.

v.

The Catalog of Days

It is Friday and I am keeping myself some distance from where I am going tomorrow, Monday, supper, death. Everything is right here, you know? The moon is here, although it's only afternoon and the sun is still parading naked over this side of the world. But the moon and its effortless

beauty a floating rock imagine!
cannot be hidden. Its invisible weight sucking tides

out as we speak as you
read even still. It is the same distance, you see, as between us and all things at odds. Hidden from each other in nothing but plain view. Every object

is at battle with every other not
to occupy the same space. Who are we to reveal this and not abide? This moment is mine keep out all else. Stay far. Keep your tides from the land, your fish from the water.

Distinguish your day from your dreams in the messy night. That is where it finds you. The anarchy of mixing memory with

T.V. and image from slumber. Which was which? All of the unhappening will devour the world. Keep from it. Stand ground. You may not find me here tomorrow. Forget me. I already feel

the next hour
wailing to be heard.

He knows. He saw himself in the catalog of days. Each page is filled with this.

Intimate

In the kitchen, things are the same. I'm keeping track of them. The dirty dishes. The clean ones. The scent of old food hanging in air
what you thought about
yesterday, but forgot. The oranges have been on the counter for almost a week. Are meant to be ripe, but surely have turned to sugar and rot inside by now. The floor can't stay clean. We keep walking on it. Keep going back and forth. Sometimes

we make love and afterward I am standing on the kitchen floor sifting through the fridge in search of new fruit. Maybe tonight I will love you so much that I can turn to face the warm rotted orange and bite without thought through bitter skin and marmalade
flesh to sour juices ripe with dying time. I could love
you that much in the dark same kitchen with bare feet on dusty tiles wanting only to return to bed and disappear into the black empty cover where the cold
hides out in the night and I
am so alive that we must not ever die. I could do that. I can imagine myself later in this same kitchen.

Sloth

What we have been told will grow in the fur of a sloth: plants and insects,
too small or filthy green or pure exotic to be believed, will find a sloth home
hanging in a forest canopy by cartoon
claws, minor scythes left dug into wood for hours each time. There is a jungle

in the jungle between the coarse hairs of sloth. It is
wearing its world like a self tailored god, combing
thoughts with gnarled teeth. I wear my mind and its sloth in dirty
clothes, untangling
my tangled unjungle days, covered on my skin with the ghost of myself left
unclean from just that day ago. There is a ghost in the
ghost between the skin and flesh of men. Wearing former
lives like fur in the coarse strands of memory is a haunting that
can grow. We should know. We are

the haunted, we are the ghosts. We are the tangled thoughts. I
am the sloth, the jungle, the scythe. We are in this
world and think nothing of it.

The Myth of the Sandbar

How many days has it been,

watching the tides make their way in and out of the lives of strangers? It is old.

It has been here forever. Are you listening? The tide is the song of the ocean,

the beautiful girl of the world, teasing every watcher with its permanent inability to stay. We can set our clocks by it. This is my first lesson for you, that time is a matter

of measuring the unknown. The months are full of this. In the morning our muscles are weak from sleep, in the night they are weary from being, in the day you may find

yourself carrying an umbrella or picking out clothes for a funeral or laughing. This is all that we do, behave unaware of what will come next and sometimes be tired for everything

we do not know. Sometimes there is a mountain nearby or the night shows up in the sky with an unexpected view of evidence of the rest of the universe, and then we can

spread our arms and hands wide with thrill—like all days are mirrors of history and beginning and we can stand anywhere in it, a lucid unending molecule amongst. Sometimes

I think of you. Sometimes it is impossible. Sometimes you walk to a corner to meet someone not there or arrive at a shop door to find it closed and, instead of anything else, you

are glad to be alone. And, sometimes, on occasion you would drive to the shore to see the tides for themselves and listen to a song early before the day had begun. You may

have seen a dim space, thinly green, in the ocean not so far off and thought, maybe it was a place where the water grew shallow there. And you would not know which way the tide

was travelling, whether the waves were rising or falling, and you would have imagined without reason—walking all the way through the deep long water to find out the truth

of the myth of the sandbar. And you would stand at the ocean's edge and wonder, what it is worth, why are you standing where you are, how far it is, if the ocean would forgive you.

The Intention of Memory

It is time to tell the story
again,

or part of it.

~

There is always only one,

rising to the surface like hands from dishwater
or lowering from air like night

remembering its place in the day.

So obvious it is hard to say
what happens.

So obscure

it is impossible to tell
from the things that do not

~

occur.

It is what you did last night
do you remember? Were you there?

The summer has reached half way through August,
some of it has made the papers.

Some has been
forgotten. Eventually

everything.
Last night

~

I stood on a floor

where once there was water,
deep. I was surrounded. The story

blinding, from the inside

out. Hold your breath.

Eels and fish made way
past the crawdad ancestors, consuming
from the ocean soup and seeking

various light outside

of the sand bound weeds and between
the ruckus of the above waves.

And I

~

attempt to remember
even though it was never mine.

Maybe, I thought, if I can uncover
the dark rearview sight
of previous eyes I

will not need to remember
anything else. I will only have

to think back to that
and start again
from there.

~

It is the intention of memory to make the story whole.
But nothing happens as it did.
And every moment we think of something else.

-
To start the story over.

-
I was driving the same way
as always
when I saw a house, a tree, a sidewalk
with one wheel track of mud none

of which I had ever seen
before.

People were leaving work, and the possibility of rain was likely in their heads.

-
Some cars stopped for each other.

The wind laced humid grass
cooling dusk
and light
through branches,
across a few streets.

-
Men walked in for a drink.

-
And when someone returned that night before dinner,
to pull up the key from the ring

and unlock the door,

they walked into a place
that they had never thought of

-

as anything,
but home.

Any ocean,

~

anywhere else,

the furthest thing
from mind.

Into the Delta

There is something about it still
to be sorted out in the same way the current
chooses which water to move, what it will bring with, what
it leaves. They renovated the salon just months before

the hairdresser died. New chairs for
the wake, fresh trim. It had already been a beauty shop
four times again, each owner tiling new
floors over the ones before. Soon they tore them all

into the silt of memory. It was like a dig. But nothing
poured into a sifter. We don't do that to our own
remains. These we bury. It isn't worth studying what just
happened. We were there

to stop it in the first place, but didn't and the dirt
won't show us any more than that. Sediment only
measures how long it was a certain color. They sold
the lamps and moved

the ceiling fans to a new shop. You'd never know
they were even there.

Odes

Lake

Measure me. I am wide with the sorrow
of the world. Have you grown

this way too? Broadening as lakes do, each rivulet and stream
unmasking the water it feeds to reveal
what must become you? You think you can wash

yourself this way. You think each
morning that this sun
will do you good.

You hope that what rain carried over

you in the night can be ignored, or
forgotten, or misplaced—that all
that you are is already enough.

~

Wind

When the air that travels

the planet without end finds you,

there is nothing to do but breath. No moment
is less than this. It is soaked with the words

of lovers, thick with final wishes, chilled
in parts by hidden glaciers, even shared along
its formless edges by everything
that no one remembers.

Nothing escapes the wind.

You will want it to give
these secrets away, to finally break
open with all that it knows like wood
cracks, then splits to free
the fire it hides. And it has tried.

The water that rushed
at you in apocalypse waves

one day on the violent shore—

the wind brought it to you, shrieking
a thousand miles over distant
ocean. Arriving in sounds
of thunder like an ancient

voice revealed, tearing its words
out of nothing and charging the coast
with everything you wished to know.

Did you not hear it? Were you afraid?

~

Forest

Nothing in the night
is darker. Here the heavy

absence of light is twofold:
without and within.

Without is the lost moon,

carried away by all the forces
you cannot understand. You may pretend
there is reason—that something wants
the light somewhere else, that the moon is only

gone because you are not able
to see where it is. These are the comforts
we seek, occurrence

and their cause. But within is how
the colors of forest

are dark from beginning. The redwood did not want
the shadowed hues of its soft bark to soak
itself into the night as it did, bleeding
black into the air. The tall ferns waving

in silence over dead

dry needles still pray
for a secret
luminescence of which
they were told
otherwise, yet no thing that pushes

out from the damp brown earth

can bring with it
light. That is for something
else. The manzanita

knows this already, it has no desires for
anything it is not. Look at how it sheds its subtle
bark to go naked
in maroon, a red that plummets
the dark of its narrow
twisted trunks, so smooth that even in
the lightless night you know its cool
skin by the touch— can feel

from the surface what pale green it keeps beneath,

untrue until spring. And when they find you here,

knocked loose from yourself by the weight of the dark
like a limb grown too heavy too far
from the tree, what will you tell them?

They will hear none of it.

You will have to trust that only the forest
has heard. It is better that way. This is what
you will tell yourself.

~

Plains

Distance can have
no sound. It is an action
in silence. From its center of the tall

grasses the plains will catapult

you to every edge in one
motion—vision, length, horizon

and back to where you are. This can be
learned in the giant light of midday, but the sun
will make you its fool
if you try, will convince you that the place
you are is whole. Distance here is

best practiced in dusk, when you must know
that everything is further
than you. For when the light begs to stay
but can't, it will carry you with it instead. And though

this happens anywhere

that light leaves, it is only the land
that allows it. The soft wide expanses of untethered
earth will give falling light all it
needs to cascade, to roll flat away as a sea of orange

mist recoiling to the
other side. Like a fear

of heights brought about
by open space, the plains
will offer you

up to the waning sky. Do not look
down. Distance
is everywhere.

~

Twig

Some part of you has been lost to the earth.

Pretend
it means nothing. This has happened

so often, there is little left
to say. What love you spent on
something so small cannot have
purpose. But it will not be

this way. The cruelty
is infinite, that you cannot

mention. Listen as it cracks
under foot. Can you hear
how the world began? Watch how the sound

passes by, meant for somewhere

else—you could not
believe—it would have
been too much.

~

Fog

It was the coast
that brought you both here,
each arriving with every
intention to stay. The fog

will suggest that you find
its beginning, then precede you
in the night—coming on as a dream and leaving

like memory. You cannot help but be
inside it, surrounded
by a cool gray
evidence of water.

It may even

become you, consuming
the places
you depart,
filling in

where your thoughts leave off.

In its static pose the fog makes
believe that it is going
nowhere, that it can be

this way forever. But that is not
the case. An illusion learned
from time—being in one
place yet always

moving on—it is all it can do, to pretend
it is not mortal. Watch

how it lingers, falling on
sand, caressing tall bluffs of rock, patiently
cloaking every crevice of earth until you

forget that you have been
at all. Where was
it you stood? Who were
you then?

~

Valley

At sunrise, when
the world blinks
itself awake
in strands of light that lean
out over the hills and lazily come
to rest in the valley,
you may believe that you
are the first
one to arrive. Does each

beginning owe itself
the thought of rarity? It may be

the flowers. The flowers

are blinding. In every tiny mirror color, each
singular petal of soft
life unfolded, so much is shown
that you cannot know
how to look. Should you linger

on the white sparkles of azalea or the plunging
grace of the spare wild lilies? Can anything
take your glance from the trees at edge that shudder
in breeze like time shaking loose
from the day? In the moist bed of meadow the water
at your feet soaks with
the thirst of birth, seeking
to quench each unanswerable

truth as if they had never
been sought out before. The valley will beg
for you to live here. It will need
you to know. It will unveil

the comfort of its adjacent hills—the way

each slope angles only
toward you, here, where you are, among
the stems and grass.

What have you ever
done to reason against it? The morning,
in its cool, gentle candor, will make
no argument for you. This,
in the valley, can only be seen.

~

Snow

This is what
you have waited for. Transformation
brought on by stillness, when
the water makes

no move except to be caught in drift—

all that it is
captured
in the sudden descent of cold.

Amongst the shroud of its broad,
white, immaculate sameness
you must know who
you are; it is
what will save

you. You

are the human
in the center of the snow. You are
time's vessel making
way through the frozen

world. In a place where wind defines
all motion, you are the only
thing that moves
on its own.

You are singularity,
temporary, momentarily
endless—like a cloud of breath
expelled and joined
into the chilling sheaths of the limitless air.

~

Ocean

I have always been
the last of our kind. Water
becomes me. You are

all water. Empathy
makes one of everything in the world.

Do you remember?

We began together. We discovered
time. It was a pleasure—finding that things would not be
the same, that there were days and
nights, that the sky

could change. And we filled
the world with ourselves. All that frolicked and died
came again. Time was kind, allowed most
anything to happen.

It was a warm and magnificent day.

It was cold and bitter on every
inch of earth. The miles
and years were nothing.

There was so much that you
were forced into smallness, just to understand
the difference in things, the width of the

world, the ocean. Come see. Look
at the water's enormous
depth, the steepest
ravines

plunge in the planet itself, diving like a knife into
the earth—a body so grand that it does not even know
where this wound begins or ends. What untouched
places are buried under ocean here? How many dark
coves wash themselves each night with the cold black
salty water that will find them once more in a thousand
years, here, in the crevices of the sea? And the currents.

The currents that howl between humbling ocean canyon
walls like the voice of all the unheard weary, surging through
the water, travelling the world, again, and again and again and
again. You may believe this is endless,

that the water must go on, as it appears to, from the edge of shore fading
deep and deathly blue past all thought far into the infinite horizon.

But you have not been listening.

It is the final wish of the world to depart as it arrived: one
small bare stone in the universe, purely
itself and covered in all of the odd rugged
shapes that suggest what it will and may have
been. I was everything in between. In
between. Before and after
me. I was so long.
And it was barely
a moment at
all.

~

epilogue

What to See When Leaving the Philippines

We depart for Manila at dusk, crossing the bridge to Mactan
Island following an afternoon
of rain to the small airport:
the water below, the dim sparkle
of the evening lit land behind us, the church in Mindanao moments
before and its own
gently hung lights parting the palm
heavy leaves with wetness—a shine that is a question
to enter and a foreign
presence in the silt of early night pushing
us on and away. And the lone
chortling pedicab before that, passing
our van in the near empty rugged street and disappearing into
the glow of red
rear lights of jeepney far ahead. All things moving to and away, and
the locations we remain
between. Here
and there. We always the unmeasurable space
of *and*. The traveling permanence of our
selves through a series of visions. We are a word that fleets, something
there is no word for.

What I Didn't Know About the Glaciers

I remember dreams of ocean rising—tsunami where there was only pasture
buried by hills in dead center Midwest, northern Illinois. Water
collapsing into waves behind a barbed wire fence, rushing between the branchless
trunks of tall dying pines. Sweeping up
dry fallen needles until they rose in salty foam to cover roofs like the slender, brittle
antique dust of memory on Vesuvian homes—heartland apocalypse. Disaster
by way of dream. You have seen
this too, I am sure. You might remember how the thoughts of ocean
tumbled through the night, the exhausting
delirium of water. I might remember
that I am my father—come to Illinois from the land of typhoon, the Philippines, where
you can see your kitchen chair afloat down the street in a mess of dirt and palm
leaves swelling over rising tide. But what I didn't know about the glaciers
is how they stood—
ten stories high—above ancient ground in the pasture
before. The land crushed
beneath a monument of ice. How it melted in centuries. Pouring
cascades of great fresh lakes like millions of infant ideas come to
rest in the gravel of birthing hills. How the glaciers stole
the ocean out from under
me and left it only in my dreams, emptying still its waters endless motion
down the face of frozen mountains. But only in the night.
Only when the dark insists.