

2013

Long Night: Poems

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LONG NIGHT

p o e m s

Jaya Stenquist

Submitted for Partial Fulfillment
of the Prerequisite for Honors
in English & Creative Writing

April 2013

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

I. Rabbit

Red Interior - 6
Opening Moves - 7
The Thistle, Newborn - 8
Migration - 9
Rabbit (1) - 10
Fishing - 11
Away - 12
Gullfoss, Gold Falls - 13
Late September, Heron - 14
River - 15
Rabbit (2) - 16
Snow - 17
Spákonufell - 18
Moonscape - 19
Farming - 20
Life of the Island - 21
Plane - 22
Rabbit (3) - 23

II. Auroras at Skagafjörður

Auroras at Skagafjörður - 25
Saga - 26
Properties of Light - 27
Ladder - 30
No Place - 32
White Lilac - 33
Negative - 34
Vespertine - 36
House - 37
Dogwood - 38
The Greenland Sea - 39
Memento - 40
Final Night - 41
Birding - 42

Acknowledgments

I owe great thanks to Wellesley College for a generous student research grant and to the NES Artist Residency for providing me studio space and housing for the month of January. Additional thanks to my advisor, Dan Chiasson, without whom this collection would not exist, and to Alison Hickey and Frank Bidart for their critical contributions to this project. Special thanks to Justin Armstrong for first introducing me to Iceland and to NES. Continued and insufficient thanks to my family, friends and all those who have made their way into this collection.

Introduction

The absence of a person takes on its own space, its own identity. There are the instances of what anthropologists call a “trace”— a forgotten article of clothing, a gum wrapper, or an old shoe, anything that gives a sign of the former presence of a person somehow disappeared. But beyond this physical reminder, there is a mental and emotional identity created by the absence of a loved one. A void-that-is-not-a-void, a lack that we fill with desire, memory and anxiety to reshape that absent form back into our lives. A poem in this collection called “Vespertine,” describes its speaker “following no one past the bluebells, / no one, after all.” The point not being that the speaker leads herself through this metaphorical garden, but that this lack of a person, lack of something to follow, is what she cannot part herself from, cannot stop following. The lack is as visceral, as present, as real as the speaker herself.

The same is true of place. Certain spaces, locations, or landscapes, remain as important as the spaces we truly occupy. Looking to the poem “Snow”, the speaker describes herself at a party only able to “sit around and twirl my glass this way / and that. Drift in and out of the dark. In and out / of the noise.” The forced and awkward line breaks, the attempted and failed penetration into this world she literally sits within, speaks to the confusion and devastation of finding only a lack, an absence, within the immediate world, moving her toward a unreal landscape, a blank winter scene, held within her mind from “the cold of your childhood.”

The poem “River” addresses the question of presence and absence by defensively dismissing the idea of finding absence more comforting than presence, “Like I would prefer the thing that isn’t you— / the glasses, the matchbox, / the clothes unshaped on the floor.” Concluding with the expressed desire of “holding still a flying thing”, subverting the purpose of a particular object for the desire of having it close, possessing it. It is a self-defeating desire, for the instant the desired object (defined by its status of flight) is attained, it no longer flies, it is no longer what the poetic speaker desired. Similarly, the desire of something to return to the speaker is portrayed as not quite sufficient, not quite as perfect as the miscellanea that accumulates after the person has left. There is some inexplicable thing that absence, and desire within that absence, gives us that goes beyond any real, any physical object or place or person in our lives.

These poems quarrel with one another on the question of absence and presence, at times glorifying and at times defaming one or the other. For the poems are, simply put, an internal dialogue, addressing anxieties, desires and realities inappropriate for the register of the day-to-day, the spoken conversation.

*

I first traveled to Iceland in June of 2012 with a small cultural anthropology class from Wellesley College. The landscape was primordial, remote and profoundly empty. Out of nothing, a mountain would rise like a white giant coming to stand on the black earth. There was a movement everywhere, a sense of something at risk—a fault line in the middle of the island pulls the country in two little by little each year, volcanoes erupt frequently and destroy the few fertile fields on the island. In a few short weeks in June, I became obsessed with the place, the singularity and emptiness of the far north.

The emptiness of the county allows space for Iceland’s fantastic mythology. As all mythologies do, the myths of Iceland explain the country’s noteworthy phenomena: unusual craggy rocks; violent climate; prolonged night and days of winter and summer. But the myths of Iceland

seem to place an unusually high emphasis on what is invisible, absent to our clumsy senses but certainly a part of the island's activities. The best example of this theme in Icelandic folklore is "the hidden people," a parallel group of human beings who live like we do, with trade centers and houses and petty quarrels, with two major exceptions (no matter who I spoke to, these were the two differences given) they are invisible, and they "dress better."

According to Icelandic stories, the hidden people descend from Adam and Eve like the rest of visible mankind. Our inability to see them is attributed to a dinner party Adam invited God to attend but Eve was made aware of too late, when she only had time to wash and dress two of her children. The other children, dirty and in old clothes, were hidden in the closet when God came for dinner. Being omniscient, God knew of these "hidden children" and decided to punish Eve by making these children and their descendants invisible.

Life in Iceland is not easy, and—at least in my experience living in a rural town for the month of January—quite lonely. To have this parallel reality, this thriving civilization accompanying you in your day-to-day life, unseen, brings some palpable comfort. Confronted with absence, we have the ability to create something incredibly and intimately present that can become at least as important to us as our physical reality. The landscape of Iceland is perhaps ideal for poetry because it allows its poets to create so much of emptiness, imagine our own hidden selves for an instant let out of Eve's dusty closet.

I.

Rabbit

Red Interior

There's a strangeness to the call—

a swan surrounded by ducks. Grief
is a feathered animal with another body.

The night you entered my life,
like entering a room, a lake,

stepping

awkwardly

into the water, little
by little,

feeling the body become full of you.

This thing you've left with me,
take it back.

Opening Moves

White. The encounter with a dozen gulls
cruising the surface-line of a still lake.

This foreign city— this odd time—

You wait, another piece of statuary —
another dark-eye that catches you and cries, open-beaked,
winged grief, you name it. *Grief of the approach*—

For a second, you lose your mind,
and lose track of what you are, maybe

you are the gull watching the girl on the shore, you open
and close your mouth expecting a sound—
You (person or gull)

perceives a voice like the quick tug
to de-bone a fish,

the hook through the mouth of a cod.

Better, you think, not to make any noise, better
to keep quiet, to stand
still, staring into the open mouth of a

duck

The Thistle, Newborn

Again, and then again
the world begins, deep eyed,
thin skinned—

you'll learn your new vocabularies,
your new uses, seemingly

a little useless.

Once, I broke into a stranger's garden,
climbed a wall with vines, thin and green—

I lay behind the thistles and watched
two older children emerge, thorns

tucked and stuck
to their fair matted hair. The roses were like wounds, like

a little bud.

While you're there,

 blinking
in your pretty bed—

I'll be here,

busily transcribing riddles,
frantic riddles in this frantic language.

Migration

The fullness of an afternoon, all gold—
the cygnet, still grey in late-September
throws back its snake-head,

tries to preen the childhood fluff.
Young bird. Can't get rid of it.

For now, there's just
The slow motion across the lake—

later, the swift movement south

Rabbit (1)

Before we left, I had brown hair like
a summer snake, each dark bead
the color of things that stay close
to the ground. Why would you stand
on two feet? Expose that perfect belly.

We rabbits do not like to wander
but we are very good at it. We know
when things are hungry and when to freeze
like a statue of a rabbit, like something
that cannot nourish you. We know
many careful rabbit-things. Like:

desire is a summer snake
shedding its brown skin. We are
only ever trying to escape something.
When you hear a noise: first don't move,
then, move as fast you can on
your fastest rabbit-feet.

Fishing

There are places without a night—
where the cows are let out for the first time in June

for the space of only an hour,
or they burn.

Where a girl (younger than I)

claps her hands together and shouts
cows come home—come home. And home
they come.

One did not come back.

She told me, once, bright midnight encounter.

I tied another cow outside, and
then the first returned.

Like it felt *something*,
something like compulsion. Like wandering was

nothing beside the low groan. The want for dark.
The old animal tied in the light,

burning as it opened its lonely mouth—

So the lost cow placed itself there, nose-
to-nose with the other, waited.

Group animals. She told me. Group animals
always move toward each other.

Later,

I caught a fish and watched it open and close its mouth uselessly.

Away

The lake becomes an oven
out of which fish pop

their glittering bodies: late summer perfume
in a land of lakes.

The night-grass grows
its beading dampness as if in longing—

The hornets' asleep.
The bed's empty.

The lamps switch themselves on
and off, broken bulbs.

The plane that declines the horizon,
three lights blinking:

here I am—here I am.
Come find me.

It's the grief of losing sight, of
dipping further and further across the shore:

the plane that—winking—
loses me.

Gullfoss
Gold Falls

This is an island and therefore
Unreal.

That man,
who's more the idea of a man,

tells you over a beer, leans into your body:

“Gull” doesn’t mean a bird.

Dipping into the
touchable world that held (holds) you,

you’re caught,
so you listen.

“Gold” that’s the word

in English. He says.

Everything’s
so profound in translation,

you think. You hate
the poetic.

You wonder what it would take to debone a man.
A quick pull to the spine,

maybe.
Then,

your glass is empty.

Late September, Heron

The heron, deep in the lake water
blue-grey body.

Found: a pair of black shoes
Men's, Size 10.

Mysteries of late September: what's abandoned
and why. Life leaving itself for fall.

The passing heron moves
off to some other place

long feathers thin in the wind—

The moon, like some burnt thing,

hangs.

This perfection

of the moment before you've come to me,
is the perfection of a moment before you've left me.

River

1.

This is a city without a river.
Bodyless water.

I've filled the room with wild things
in stained pots, one green, one blue—

You come around,
they stretch out to the sun, little senseless sensation,

phantasm in the stem.

2.

Like I wouldn't love you with a body.
Like I would prefer the thing that isn't you—

the glasses, the matchbox,
the clothes unshaped on the floor.

Like I would prefer the shapelessness—the wrinkled moon still
in the weedy water, the dry leaf above the un-

sent note. Like I would do that.

3.

This is a city without a sun.
Unlit light.

It swells and hushes
at midnight and mid-day,
with no where to go.

I think

I would like to go birding. I would like
to hold still a flying thing.

Rabbit (2)

When all my fur fell out,
I worried you would think,
what good is all this? And then,
you would turn on the oven. But
it grew back white as a feather
from your jacket.

A winter rabbit is harder
to find than a summer one,
you have to look for those dark eyes
that never close. Never not seeing.
At night I do not sleep. I go in circles.

Snow

First snow of November.
The eye blurred in the way of winter,

in the way of a winter
mild.

What happened to the cold of your childhood?

The way a night brought everything into focus
everything sharp as paper,

sharp as all that.

*

There's a photograph
of a woman wearing my clothes sitting on your desk—

the woman who's me, at least as much
as she isn't. The one you've left, or the one who left you.

She's blonde and, I'm sure,
more interesting at parties—

I just sit around and twirl my glass this way
and that. Drift in and out of the dark. In and out

of the noise.

*

All the ways I've reshaped myself
for the coming warmth, the fading light

the coming snow, the melting snow.

Come here, come now, come
sit under all this grey.

Spákonufell

The light goes so quickly,
leaving the candles on the table
to burn like ulcers—

but they fade, smoke tints
the dim room so it is like
we are inside a burnt out country.

We will never stop being under
that mountain. Never stop
looking up at the place we'll never be.

Moonscape

As if she said, *I love you, so let's
go to sleep forever.*

As if holding the sleeping body could stand in
for rising love, what love

calls upon itself, the dregs of love.

As if in sleep he could lay his arm around the soft
belly of the moon and remained a blissful blank
in the heaving and fighting desire.

As if the sleeping lover—which is to say the idea of the lover—
were really all we wanted.

Farming

In farmyards laid out like cities
for rust, snowy grass, they turn to you

heavy-hoofed, bushy haired.

Never have you been so seen,
than by these stocky beasts with their

eccentric haircuts, laid out over their eyes.

They stick out bent heads the way an animal reaches,
one to another

and breath, soft nosed, into your palm so

you touch this ones mane, that ones furry ear, watching
the slow, long-lashed blink--

and picture, as in the old stories, old animals

lead into a ring—who bite each other for a long time
and that was good, and fought each other for this warrior's honor,

later, cooked for dinner.

Life of the Island

Life goes on with a little thud—
which is your foot on the ice.
The days end so quickly—just a few hours,
back to night. Sometimes, I'm still
on the flight from Boston Logan to
MSP (soon to move on) reading about the
death of a classmate suspended somewhere
over the middle of the country and feeling the ground so absent—
even here, sitting on the counter while you cook, while I read
you a review in the *New Yorker* of a movie
we saw together at a discount theatre, as you
throw up your comically large hands and
say... they could have just
left it at "it had its moments!"

I am having my moment.

I am having my minute, lit up—

Late, we walk out of town
past the sign of the city,
crossed out, past the horses
to the graveyard with some
old, some freshly dug graves.
And as the sun goes down fat colored
lights across granite flick on, one
by one, as if a little circus were coming in.

Plane

To be alone so tall— the pines
against settling mists, the

dullness of late-afternoon when
grey bounds every dark edge—

the tree-limbs that climb higher—no, *higher*:
the hope of some-

thing unthinking. The night
spent staring down the subway tunnel,

the underground lights
lit up.

Nothing moves more slowly
than your mind as you leave it.

Than the train,
before it screams (suddenly) past.

Rabbit (3)

I can picture how the idea of what I am
might please you— sometimes,
I am a reminder that what is delicate
can live through winter (*proof in the January hare*).
Sometimes I am a vague threat
that when you have me in your hands
feeling that soft body, my anxious
rabbit heart might just— explode

II.

Auroras at Skagafjörður

Auroras at Skagafjörður

Begin again, bright one—begin your tare of green
against the sky's blue-black, your roar of green—
behind the little church, little frequented, set fire
beyond the bay, little visible—the town's weird landmarks:
the gas station; the fish plant; the bluff; the prophetess's
flat mountain— with your weird green light.

There are certain famous dreams: the dream of
eating your lover's heart; the dream of
swerving off a cliff; the dream of finding your long-
lost sister; the dream of killing a man; the dream
of being a rabbit; the dream of buying cocaine.

There is the house, the bluff outlined
in alien light, one kind of explosion
hitting another, leaving you overwhelmingly uninteresting
amidst the things on fire, lighting up, dying.

There are certain famous visions: the vision
of a burning tree; the vision of the second self;
the vision of a green sky; the vision of a
wounded animal; the vision of a moving wall;
the vision of poisoned salt; the vision a naked woman.

The lover you want to leave will love the one
he left for you. The lights working the bluff
will work again, have worked before--
some comfort to the pattern from where you stand,
fish-like body in bright light.

There are certain famous animals: the animal
you hold; the animal in the water; the animal
on the boat; the animal where you eat; the animal
eating you; the animal you see; the animal
you don't.

Begin again, bright one—begin your tare of light
your scar of light, little lasting—dissolve into the black
night, empty night.

Saga

There were ghosts that every day
climbed the mountain, combing out
like grey mists on grey sky—
lit for three or four hours those days of your
young January. There were the ghosts like windy
prophesies blowing about their futures of *this*
will come and *you'll be like that*— unwavering
future tense, the known, certainly. And in the night
(short to follow the sun's little climb
from that fjörd to this one) the stars arose like an
idea. The street lights and the headlights
struck the ice as you slid, unsteady, along
streets frosted like streets adorned with
numberless crystals, millions of diamonds—
like you were the one to find the prophetess's
ancient treasure though it is not buried
on the mountain and you are not a virgin who
has never read scripture and you have never
drunk milk from these shaggy half-wild horses.

Properties of Light

The trouble was always: vision. How
to stay afloat in the liquid of the human eye,
how the world was small enough to fit into a beam of light.

Mozi was the first to make a pine-sized hole in a dark box
and note the blurred image, a duplicate of the outside world,
inverted within the world of the box.

When you told me you were a photographer,
I thought— *it doesn't matter*.
And then I made a bad joke.

Johannes Kepler first called this dark room *camera
obscura* – literally (from Latin) “dark room.”
The vastness of who you were—what you had been to whom—
was not what I wanted.
What I had was that compulsion
to prove my body.

The night it was hot enough to wear a thin
white dress and late, you walked me down the street to where
we saw the city— like a photograph of a city –

In 1826, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce used light-sensitive emulsion
to fix the outside image onto a screen on the camera obscura.
It was the first lasting image made purely by light.

That was the same night you told me
you had discovered the man who taught
you to take a photograph, who you loved the way we love

the fathers we didn't have,
raped his 12-year-old daughter. And in that way, I think,
I became the thing you trusted. Just to trust.

1839 saw the introduction of a silver surfaced
copper plate on which reflected images were imprinted.
To produce a single image, the “daguerreotype” required

ten minutes of exposure to a still world.
When you walk into a person's life at a certain time,
it doesn't matter who you are.

When Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre
first demonstrated the ability of this silver and copper plate,
the crowd gasped, “What a discovery!”

“Extraordinary!” “This is Nature itself!”
Though nature was not black and white, nature had
certain leaking orifices. There were these perfect summery instances—

like after two days in the car, when we
swam in the cool water of the St. Croix
feeling that delight of something covering every bit of you,

something willing to take you in whole
and hold you up to the light—
though your long limbs got too cold. You and your camera.

Daguerre, of course, was not the only one
experimenting with the light. There existed a great
feud between William Henry-Fox Talbot and M. Daguerre—

though, the competition was not entirely understandable, for
their methods were so distinct; Daguerre produced images on metal,
while Talbot’s were fragile, encased in glass.

Her name I knew early on. I was interested
in the way an actor would be interested— this is how
to play it, where you move, where you stay still.

Talbot was the son of English aristocrats,
Before the daguerreotype,
Daguerre designed sets for small-time theatres,

She was the daughter of a playboy
bunny, she worked in a church in Nantucket,
she kept two pet rabbits with children’s names.

And when we were living in this dark
house half-buried in the snow, this empty
northern hemisphere—

a place that seemed to lack everything
but us, the ghost we carried with us
filled up the rooms— stanzas and cameras.

It was a neat trick: the double
and re-double of light one way
and then the other, the flick

of a shutter impressing an image,
the way you might hold on to something
as insubstantial as *vision*,

as light that bounded off the skin that once held you
(or that you held) the image that speaks frankly as if to say,
this is not you—you cannot return to this...

But that was love and its relinquish,
the soundless miracula of the image
recreated. The morning we left that dark house,

the wind strong enough
to push waves back out to sea, you said,
go ahead of me. Which was fine, as

I did not want to see you.

Ladder

I.

Everything falling seems just
to fall— the geese align themselves

for flight. How can the night anticipate
its break? At six, living upstairs the farm,

I saw a cow give birth too soon—
the calf all wrong, all twisted in the womb.

One day she walked the field in a great moan—
two hooves willing themselves into light.

Grief like a sieve, poured over
poured over and over—

Heat against the ears of a cow,
as if this thing— never ends.

II.

The barn stands, held by its constellation
of nails, tinged with rust.

Stars like a sieve, poured over
poured over and over—

The man who cut away cardboard and tissue-
like paper, puppets to hold

against some light,
figures like stars:

The prince with the enchanted ring, the child
who spoke to birds, stories like that

against the rough-cut wood that rubbed and splintered
into calves— *shadow*, it went, *shadow*

light, shadow, some spell so I hardly noticed blood
like a vein in the wood. Wood like a needle in the skin.

III.

Farmyard like a sieve, poured over
poured over and over—

Maybe, here, a space for mourning,
the still-born calf and the man like a puppet

falling from a ladder (years ago) to split the skull,
display the tumor spread fat

like some upcoming spring.
The day that keeps not coming,

not coming until it's there.

No Place

Here, where every house is low to the ground
every tree bent over, shorter than you—

You who have become magnificently aware
of everyplace you end, every place—

the wind like a careful reminder at the edge of a hand
reaching through the dark,

reaching only this—
your pen, forgotten on the kitchen table.

White Lilac

Vivified. Given their scented bodies
on branches now weighed down with new
self, now over-pouring

now off-shooting. What to do with these things
reinvented? Slightly faded, reeking
of what's been done and re-

done—
There's an effortlessness
to the return, though we're taught

don't come back. Even with these new parts,
this Frankenstein body limping along,
reaching for

the love of a child,
indiscriminating—
this new flower, or the other,

once purple, the color of a bruise from falling
out of trees. We used to fall out of
a lot of trees—

Found instead, the love of an adult,
resistant.
I would like to feel

for a second to feel,
the feeling of that swan
an instant before she lands,

wings to water,
no longer borne by wind,
not yet taken under,

taken in.

Negative

Whatever else, there was love,
if not entirely of her, maybe
of being with her, that warmth to the touch.

The night she said
make me a deal. And already, even without saying it
he knew, and at the thought, terrified, she told him —

When they arrived in the room she removed
their clothes, the shoes
took a long time.

She tried to undo the distance but
he was like the moon, unfuckable.
The bed became a single large animal, devouring itself.

When he did cry she was in shock:
such a large person breaking in two;
she wondered many things as she

sat cross legged, his head on her chest and his long legs
scrunched and sprawled around her.
Perhaps that was just what leaving a man was like.

She opened the door,
listened to the banging of fireworks she couldn't see,
imagining red sparks, flowers lighting and dying in the sky.

*

The mountains were overtaken
the mist along the sea where she would walk collecting sea weed,
imagining the place it must grow, deep out in that blackness, the plant

that moved *up, up* toward the light
swayed by the many intricate currents, like a woman's hair—
and now, washed ashore, now torn apart.

There was always her fear of becoming her mother.
She hated children, felt disgusted watching her friends
reach out to an infant's disproportionately large face and grabbing hands.

Every day she thought, somehow, *somehow*
I'm pregnant. Another reason to leave him, to leave everyone.
Truly, if she could have it any way she'd move to an

uninhabited island in the middle of a lake, in the middle
of a forest, in the most uninhabited region of the northern world.
Maybe with a dog.

*

The plants were wilted
in their little green and blue pots, newly
repotted. The bed was large space with no one in it.

It was not the reality of any one thing,
but her position between them that
wore her—

wore her like the black sweater
found years ago after a party, now thin as silk
torn as an old piece of paper.

She liked to go to the edge of the lake to watch the water,
held together. She liked to turn and look behind, the
space once full of her. There are certain bodies

interested in the big lack, limbs
concerned with *what they are not doing*.
His famous self turning away in bed.

Vespertine

Deer follow each other through the garden,
nose to tail, nose to tail.

that stag has one more spring in him,
this doe's heavy pregnant.

This morning I saw a hawk tail like a rusting drain.

At my feet, a squirrel beat against the ground.

I hate enticing wildness in a thing—
I hate watching someone's appetite roll on—

Once, I loved a carousel,
carved horses and a single leaping deer.

I ran to the knees of a man I thought my father— though
he was living in cloudy Uppsala, could not have been—

who was it
in his black coat by the animals going round and round?

The flowers sink and swell in the remains of light.
The doe moves along in line, long legged strides.

Today has lasted twenty years,
last a little longer

I'm not a deer, you know,
I'm following no one past the bluebells,

no one, after all.

House

I could not think why it made you so frightened
when I talked about the tragedy of a house—like a body

so committed to the thing inside of it,
the thing that cannot help but abandon.

I like the idea of the house that moved around
dug up from its foundation to float (not quite—to be suspended) across a field.

Or— the story of the woman who moved into a house
while the owner quietly left it, no period of emptiness.

Or—the house you went to one time,
for no reason, except that you wanted to wanted to stop living.

Dogwood

all this brass to open
and close a door

the mirror that gives rise to
my face—

outside
the shrub's elate
with flowers

filaments
bursting out with anther
bursting out

I stole a bud—

just a little tear and it gave
I thought, I'd put it in my hair

The Greenland Sea

You will trade the lake—frozen over—for a
new horizon: this clouded ocean studded with porous rock,
the sometimes sun—

the house that sits under the snow becomes the life of an island
(your life as the island): Your new favorite words, you repeat them
many times. Here's a place

of jagged ice and black birds
against grey skies, little horses that walk one behind the other
lead on again, lead on.

And in mid-afternoon the arrival of dawn,
the coffee, unfinished, the Wall of Love baring down on you, on a body
too small, too quiet for all that.

The changes overcoming the body
moved to this island town. This fish eating town. It all becomes
this fish eating body.

Once, a woman climbed the highest mountain on the bay each day
to comb her hair. And the shoreline, you're told, was carried, rock
by rock by elves who have a habit of moving things around.

Once, you'll pay a woman on a Friday afternoon to tell your fortune,
hear how you have a heart, *anxious heart*.
dangerous heart—

Pointing to a v shape bellow the right ring finger
but you don't need to worry about money... She will spend a long time discussing
the *man* (or *moose*) thudding around your

mind. You drink too much when you're bored.
The sea wind will blow your whole self around on the ice and make you feel
every place you start, every place you are. This is you, touched by air. This is not, blown away—

In the end, there will have been only this:
the mountain overcome by clouds, the double glass giving a view
through the empty workshop across the street, the

blue vase on the sill, the distant dog,
the broken chair, the light coming through muffled like a voice into fabric.
The sounds of a person falling into sleep, the little voice beside you

like a little doubt.

Memento

Impossible to see, across the bay—

only a gull passes into the eye, restless,
white spot

diving, returning—

flick of the mind across a blue space.

That thing that warms you is leaving,
goodbye, you think, *goodbye*—

you never really cared for all that warmth.
The house that stood, still stands, all those miles away,

only the half you can never have remains.

Final Night

On the brink of leaving, she
was blown about like all that wind-caught solidity. All those things,
untethered. No—things tethered, but pulled to the brink—

The door at her back inviting her to warmth—
come in, come be a part of Love.
Her body, the largest small thing.

The wind like many loud people a long way away.
Isn't this body enough,
enough to home all the warmth?

Why receive all these houses,
all these perfect houses, never wanted.
The things she only felt when feeling something else—

The photograph, the looking back after walking
a long way to see, clear as an indent in the snow,
the place her body had been.

Birding

Cruising the surface-line,
the gull, beak parted--

doesn't speak. The world

exists the way a word I might say
exists

the way we used to run around the woods
dirt all over, the way

we remembered it,
hungover, thoughtlessly repeating: I

love you-I love you—

which was to say, please,

erase me.