

## AVIAN LEXICON

The returning riff of daybreak:  
*caws, frips, chee chees* now roll  
in my ears like that morning  
two first-grade boys coaxed  
a rowboat from its gravelly hold.

*Chit chit* chatter from the avian lexicon  
skipped like stones across the lake  
quelled by boyish sighs  
and awkward oars in too-small hands.  
Trailing eddies foretelling.

The smattering of birdsong scales –  
I was inclined to decipher  
this economic dialect:  
*build a nest, search for worms, listen – storm,*  
light turned dirtier gray.

Wings flapped from boughs.  
I didn't know my brother's bed  
lay cold, that water swallowed  
the silver starboard until it hurled itself  
bow against brow

of the boy with no orange jacket.  
Arms slapped,  
a river down his throat  
Sun broke, silencing.  
Tomorrows ripen with refrain.

## SPEAKING TO ME, THE FOG SAYS

Walk slowly down Bean Road.  
Go no further than Squam's edge.  
Floating dock, bleached adirondacks,  
abandoned.

Beware the derelict fence  
leaning in too close.  
Scurry past mailboxes  
huddled like drunken men.

Don't trespass on the private drive.  
You don't know where it ends.  
Overgrown grasses  
will sandpaper your legs.

Implore that ghostly car  
to lead you out.  
No, its megaphone of light –  
stonewalled.

Eat the cold bearing down  
the gully of your throat.  
Floundering words  
silent in your gut.

Chase your threadlike breath –  
boots sprinting  
off-kilter on rutted asphalt –  
through my amorphous body.

Are those footsteps yours?  
Someone else's?

## METONYMY

It wasn't in his words, which were often brusque,  
or in the spaces between them  
where gestures never hung,  
it was in this simple act –  
within their shared closet  
among tilted hangers and button-down shirts  
pressed too closely against each other –  
where he hung the special-ordered 8 x 10 print  
perfectly square,  
tack deftly centered on the matte,  
so the photographer could watch  
the tanned woman in a white bikini  
emerging from blue water against  
a cerulean sky, her hand  
brushing strays from a strawberry-blond halo  
behind ears, her hips sturdy and wide  
like her smile, and the photographer  
could see my mother and smile back.

## THE OUTERMOST RING OF THE ARCHERY TARGET

Lies. Why not  
tight, taut or light  
lies? Sweetened to skitter  
brightly from your tongue  
not droop from syrupy  
lips in the business  
of fiction? Why not  
yellow lies or midnight blue  
sparkling like a night sky  
that envelopes you  
sucks you in, leaves you  
awed and soothed  
in the rounded edges  
of endless space? Why  
not lies that nip, never  
bite, lies that sip, never  
gulp, lies that zip  
away with a breath  
and vanish when they're  
forgotten or banished  
to an unused closet  
in the attic, piled up  
static before they tumble  
against the door in dust  
that coats the ridges  
in the window trim  
and bridges from the old train  
set, frayed silk ties  
not yet donated, in reds  
and browns and blues but  
never cream, silver or neutral  
or white, like all those lies.

## INFIDELITIES OF TIME

They began to forget the color of the sea. Then  
the pitted dirt road leading there,  
wild-growing manzanitas,  
then the view from their bungalow.

The pitted dirt road leading there  
kicked up dust when they walked  
two miles each way, every day  
for fourteen years.

Wild-growing manzanitas  
lined the walk. They bent to glossy leaves  
smooth like the skin on each other's thighs  
when they lay side-by-side.

Then the view from their bungalow  
salted and dusted over.  
Their sandals no longer slapped the front step  
and there was nothing to forget but each other.