Len Roberts

REVISITING A BEACH IN MAINE
AND THINKING ABOUT MY BROTHER, RAYMOND

Cold Maine water, weirs and sea lions; all day
in the strong sun with you, Raymond, one of the dead,
clean as the salt spray, your eyes clear
as the ocean glass the waves make of stone, as far-flung
as the white mists which gather at each end of this
        beach I walk on,
and as near, as hard as the four and quarter-inch
        measure used to determine whether to keep the
        lobster or to throw it back in.
You, coming back to ask if I recalled the library ruins
when you told me you'd found boys' legs as graceful
        as girls',
that you found their bodies to be the same.

And my rejection of you, my brother, and my fear of
        myself, or for myself, I still don't know which,
and then my hesitation to drink from the same beer
        bottle.
So I walk along this rocky shore
letting myself be mesmerized by the slow sound of
        water on rock,
the hissing curves in salt-light, where the discarded
        shells remind me of half-lives and the sun burns
its time on the sand, rises in waves as though a voice
        over a child's bed
Slowly the light on wave becomes more substantial
than the shells, the water sounds and sand,
the light glittering on peaks of waves just as they turn
        under,
suck, crash, then glide in to ebb out.

And I remember, with the aid of the light, with the
        light reaching back further than I can go, let
        alone comprehend,
until the light becomes the pavilion light sparkling off
        your belt buckle as you danced in the center,

or the light on your bony spine mother ran her hand
        down that night near the campfire,
the light siren of the Massachusetts State Police
        bringing you home,
the empty light of YMCA rooms, the light on your
        forehead
as you said you didn't know how much more you could
        take.

Here, watching this wave light, flickering, covering
        everything,
here, trying to follow, to understand, but being
        tugged out by the motion of water beyond whatever
        you are or I am,
in this moment of unlearning, in this drifting,
I hear myself say "Forgive me," and I say it again
        and again.

John Rothfork
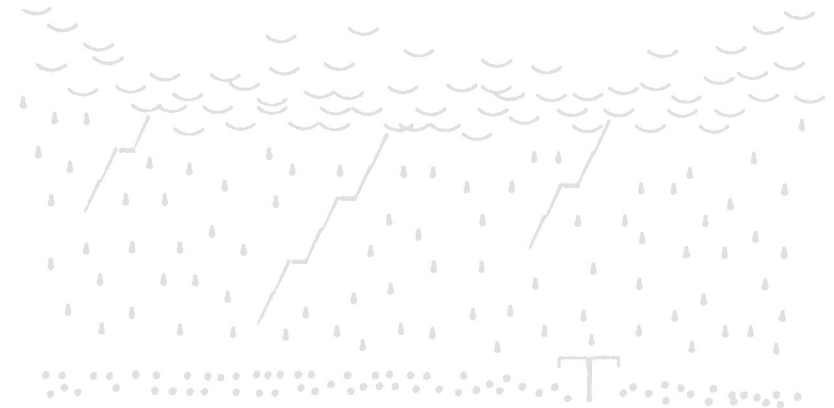
I am the earth song
in darkness I come for life
mingling, washing, renewing