

NICOLE COOLEY

Dear City

For days the water holds on, will not release the city

*

and from up here I can't hold on to you, my city,

*

can't reach my parents who refused to leave the city.

*

In school we were taught: shaped like a bowl this city

*

can't withstand the weight of too much water, city

*

braced by dirt levees, all the floodwalls cracking. City

*

where I no longer live, where I am locked out, city

*

I lived in for so long, that has since lived in me, city

*

I must now watch on this computer screen, late-summer city—

*

“Watch the video of the worsening saturation of the city.”

*

“Watch the video account of unanswered screams.” City

*

fringed by a river, by a wide lake that spills over the city,

*

oh, pale green city of my imagination. Now I can’t carry you, city,

*

can’t shutter you tight within my body to stop the repeating

*

of our jump rope rhyme: Lost a city. Lost a city. Lost a city. Lost