

LETTER FROM ZANZIBAR
—for Jean Kilbourne

I.

Remember that shoreline?—wind,
sun, the bad water . . . I don't.
I remember nothing
but your hands
and one knee,
pointing away. The desertions
we mentioned—they're not
so worthless: the amount of air
a small bird's wing displaces,
the heartbeat of a snail . . .

II.

Right now, on these dry boulders,
I can say: Take fear or any
simple uncertainty—it's water
but moves downhill faster
and more quietly.
And, when it gets there, is unnoticed
or else noticed, and fished
by those who believe anything
yanked from darkness,
no matter what it is, is good.

III.

I can understand almost everything:
yellow scissors, fields of warm
snow, theories about swans—
that's easy—but these declensions,
these ersatz needs?
Something is wrong
with the earth or the sun.
One's not moving fast enough
around the other.
And that's only half the gamut.