

dividing; rolling off  
the alligator's lip, through  
the cooter's belly, into Red's  
water dish. And everything  
not in water is coming  
out of water: the trees rising,  
the hummock  
where Ardith lived; the stand  
of cypress, where there was still  
an ivory bill, even the sky  
at night—darkness  
out of darkness, studded  
with stars—which the granddaughter  
now follows in the threads  
of constellations:  
  the arc  
to Arcturus; big dipper  
to Polaris, the celestial pole.

## FISHING

The beach rocks when he drops me off  
  in the morning—and the lawn  
and my bed, when I sleep after fishing  
  all night. My chest  
and stomach flat on the mattress.  
  Rise and fall, like a line  
on the fathometer's spool of turning  
  paper. My eyelids—I close  
my eyes and see the red glow  
  of the compass in the cabin.  
When I wake, everything will be still:  
  my boots at the door, the lawn  
fresh with light, upright cedars,  
  horizontal stretch of sea.

In the cabin we drink coffee, pale  
    hands cupped around mugs, below us  
the net tears into mud. When the winter  
    flounder leave, the window  
panes come into the bay. Their grey backs  
    speckled with color, bodies  
so thin I can see bones through  
    skin. I pick through them  
with a nail on the end of a stick,  
    save the largest, shovel the rest  
back over the side. Some have been pressed  
    against the mesh of the net, flesh  
like a child's palm, bruised and soft.

I have tried so many times to take  
    this photograph: white door frame,  
view beyond: green strip of lawn,  
    sea wall, clouds above breakers,  
but I can never focus the inside  
    and the outside; the kitchen  
darkens and the cedars blur. Ink flushes  
    onto my hands when I cut the squid  
into squares; it comes clean in water.  
    On days when I do not fish  
I walk the island. In a sumac bush  
    a mockingbird flutters like a scrap  
of torn curtain.

When I was a child, they would bring up  
    eels from the river by the house:  
buckets full—they did not begin or end,  
    twisting around themselves in a circle  
continuous and winding; I still think  
    some morning I will wake up  
and everything will be clear to me:  
    squares of light on the ceiling,  
the wallpaper, the curtains in dotted  
    swiss, and I will say, "this  
is my life." The knotted fringe stilled  
    in the breeze.