

Loneliness

As a boy, I'd climb trees,
reach into nests birds

would leave unattended.
I'd fill my hand

with small eggs, and often
one or two hatchlings

would stare at me
from behind the sprigs.

There were times I wanted
to take them home,

keep them as my own,
raise them, imagined their beaks

one day opening
to call me, "Father."

Parting

There was a time
I had no word for *darkness*,
and so I said, *darkness*.

I had no word to say *devotion*,
and so I said, *Two sons*
grieving one mother.

A time came when our parents
sat under a tree
and sobbed for us, their sons

on their way
to a new country.

When I try to return to my boyhood,

sometimes I end up, a grown man,
with my head

on my mother's lap.

Migrations

When my father lost his memory,
he went on remembering he was lost.
I'm in a desert, he said.
Now I'm in a river.

Always in another country
even as he sat on the sofa.
Where am I? he would ask
the news reporter on television.

When he slept, his eyes went on seeing—

The ceiling cut into pieces like cake
by the streetlights. The strange woman
leaning close, watching him sleep.

Why You Never Get in a Fight in Elementary School

In this country,
everything about you is foreign
and no one likes the look of scarcity.
You want to tell them
that when you draw a river
on a piece of paper, a fish
always jumps out of it
and you are always ready to catch it.
You are the fish, yet you are not the fish.
You are this: a kid, and the home you knew
begins to fill with water.
There goes the chair where your father sat
to eat his dinner by the light
of the kerosene lamp.
There goes the only memory you have
of your mother's feet.
You want to tell them that the ocean
where you stand is not an ocean.
It is your new country
where your body will be lifted
by all the ways

Hombres

The fields vibrating with buckshot, evening
 like a horsetail trailing the light's dim promise.
My uncle brings home the half-open mouth
 of a white-tailed deer, the rest of its body
follows, antlers heavy
 like a wooden cross.
I am small, press myself against my father's legs,
 the massive animal on the table
someone built sturdy for times like these.
Under the lightbulb gently swaying in the humid air,
 the men drink beer
and point to the only star willing to testify
 on their behalf.
I am curious about death, but I've never seen
 the meadows where the grown men go,
never alone to rub wilderness
 all over my arms and chest.
Staring into the buck's dead eyes,
 I know I will be alone one day,
 in a field all atremble with evening,
the dying light's bristle against my face,
 the torsos of the men who loved me
 laced with the earth's skin.