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"Calhoun," "Thunder"

William Reichard

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Two Poems

WILLIAM REICHARD

Calhoun

I sit, listening
to the lapping
of Midwestern waves
against the moors
of an old dock.
What does the water say?
Natalie says
we don't know waves here.
She grew up
on Long Island's shores,
never afraid of water
the way I am afraid.
I listen to the water
for as long as I can.
I read its surface
like the text
of a difficult book;
it's what's left unstated,
underneath,
that frightens me;
the way the inevitable returns,
a mythical serpent
rising from the lakebed,
breaking the water's
still veneer,
defying the order
I've demanded
all my life,
insisting on
a splendid,
secret world
of its own.

Thunder

Five-thirty, July, and it's dark.
All of the paperback covers are curling.
The book covers are not made
of cheap paper.
My hair curls, which always hangs
limp like a worn rope.
My door curls, the lock
threatening to snap
when I turn the bolt,
pull the warped door open.
My arms curl. Summer has come
and there you are in Chicago,
eight-hundred humid miles away.
My arms are empty;
their bones and muscles
have lost your shape.
It's getting darker.
No light to prepare dinner
and the flies mass
on the screen, dying
to be let in, to bite once.
The trees are going limp,
the vacuum of the storm
sucking out the last hot winds.
Everything in the air stalls,
on my skin a thin membrane
of sweat and pollen.
Now the man next door
crosses the street to his car,
his steps shudder through still ground.
Thunder's coming! he promises
an unseen companion.
He wears no shirt.
His chest is hard and shines
smooth with sweat.
The whole dark sky begins to shake.