

## CAROL JENE BEEBE

### *Snakeskin*

#### *Lake Erie, Catawba Island*

The lake returns, a twentieth-century Lazarus,  
and now the islanders have faces that sag  
from years of cosmetic smiles  
fading with April deposits.

The shopkeeper waits, his years impatient  
with his dwindling stock. He gives away items  
marked "imported from Japan."  
To sell the shop would mean his death.

The woman in the lakefront house  
collects dollar bills for parking.  
She clutches them against her J.C. Penny shift,  
her concealed middle thick from Florida winters.

Her husband circles his trailer court at night;  
he is the block chairman, sometimes knocking  
on doors.

His skin is etched like veins of English ivy  
with lines of prosperity.

The captain of the ferryboat  
makes the trip to the next island  
in sixteen minutes now. It used to take him  
thirty.

The fee remains the same.

At the side of the road  
a discarded snakeskin  
dries in the sun. Its owner  
has slipped away to grow another.