

**SWIMMING**

**I**

Black ants  
and mosquitos  
bite my legs.  
Fish nibble  
their way up my thighs.  
Late at night  
we swim.  
And after,  
bare breasts,  
soft flannel.

**II**

The lights on the shore  
are just closer stars  
wrapped  
in the black  
lake of sky.

It is so still the ripples  
stretch on above us  
to rejoin the moon.

Trying to name the stars,  
I say I see Virgo.  
You say there are so many  
triangles up there.

My head spins slowly.  
There is nothing beneath my feet  
but the fish swimming in the sky.

### III

The young brave dove, ice autumn  
water encasing him, stroke  
for stroke to the island.

The Manitowish people  
gathered a tithe of the harvest  
loaded canoes and set out.

Two hundred years later  
I follow their path.  
It is summer, yet I gasp,  
have to stop, float awhile.

Already sunning on the rocks,  
you wave. I kick my legs,  
stretch my arms, pull  
this fragile body through the lake.

### IV

I lie on my stomach in sand  
and feel the mark along  
each side of my gut  
where hot beach stops  
and cool air begins.

The sun scalds my back.  
The waves boil in my ears.  
My right hand holds a small shell;  
my left clasps your thumb.

Your nose and one eyebrow  
rise from the beach, corniced  
in my Romanesque armpit arch.  
A strand of hair crosses your cheek,  
and I feel the moist hiss  
of your breath on my arm.

I toss. I stare at the ceiling.  
I can't get to sleep here  
in my basement in Illinois.

V

Four miles out, a fog horn sounds.  
Another fog horn halloos.  
Two ships pass slowly,  
port to starboard,  
red and green.

On the beach  
we search for their silhouettes  
but see nothing except the sky  
waving wildly before our eyes.

It is cold and our elbows  
quiver beneath the binoculars.

I try to find the moon  
but it slips past one lens,  
eludes the other altogether,

as a ranger's searchlight  
sweeps us from the shore  
back through the paths  
in the dunes to where

the only ships are stars  
that bellow the night alive.

***6-Cornfield Review***