

adrift in florida

last night i dreamed
that the whole state
of florida was adrift,
out to sea, the off-tempo cadence of
waves slapping against the ground's
wooden underside,

every house a
hold, each window a
portal. which i guess meant
that every house was a boat,
not the whole state—

yes, maybe that's what it was!
every house a boat at
nighttime, pitch-dark water
slapping slapping against the
wood. anyway, the gulls
didn't seem to mind.

they were waiting,
circling,
biding time
while i lay on my bed....

that is the correct use
of "lay," right?
oh yes, merriam-webster says
i can use it intransitively
even if it's not book-correct.
so "lay." i was laying,

feeling the ship-house heave,
bearing who knows where,
the interstate silenced. animals
in trees, chattering, but
belly-full. only

the humans bitching
about their losses of perceived
ownership over parcels of
earth. talking by cell phone
because no one could drive
in this waterlogged

mess. only boat owners could
get around. the pleasure craft owners. but
you know how the wealthy are
about public service
without television cameras present.
and i think

it was about isolation,
this dream. every house
a raft
drifting off to sea, a sea
globally warmed to be
bathwater-pleasant,
salty and vaguely

vegetable as lawns
decomposed.
cars underwater,
as i said. sheds and bottles
drifting by. dogs

paddling around. maybe
it was that
the whole state was
flooded like katrina. but
there was no blaming the sky, cursing
government, weather, luck. and, besides,

there wasn't the same sense
of hurricane urgency.
no, it was more of a backyard
fence-to-fence chat among
neighbors, a barbecue gone
slightly awry.

and also,
in a flood, you wouldn't hear
the slapping of waves
under the house,
beneath the yard, causing

the heave from side to side,
which we struggled against
to sleep
and for which we developed sea-legs

to cook and shower,
each of us in our own
rooms,

me finally alone on my bed
remembering my lovers,
how we'd vowed
really
never to want to be alone

at the hearts of all those
vows.
and yet, here i was,

alone

in florida, a state
rapidly becoming the sea,
in a house like a boat,
and my bedroom heaving,
and my heart heaving with it,

listening to the slap
of waves, ceaseless,

a rhythm too old
to decipher
yet all too recognizable
in its persistence.

I Heard Gunshots

I heard gunshots
 Repetitive ratatat
Sounded like an automatic
 An automatic weapon to threaten
Threaten and kill
 Quietly turned the lights off
Room dark, down on the floor
 And then and then got up
And then got dressed
 Put on pants and a hoodie
Walked around the
 Walked outside the front
Front of my building
 Looked at the lights on the ground
Lights in the sky were planes
 No stars in the lights in the
Walked down the street toward
 Walked toward the mailbox
Thought I'd check the times on the mailbox
 Saw him on the bike
Sitting in a black
 Black sweat shirt on a bike
Some kind of gleam
 Turned away, feigning that I'd
Pretended I'd forgot something and walked
 I walked up my driveway
An angular slope wondering
 His eyes following me and
Walked up the driveway and low light
 Walked up the metal grate stairs and
Walked into my apartment and
 Kept it dark and refilled the Brita
My shadow on the window as I
 As I refilled the Brita kept my shadow off
Kept my shadow off the window
 Wondered if he saw me

chakra poem 6: white pantsuit

you of the lavender Jaguar
you of the perfectly ironed white pantsuit
you with the indigo Prada bag
and high heels of clear plexiglass
and walking by some bullish neighborhood guys
all shoulders and pores
in tank tops pulling sunglasses down noses
in greasy garages
and them going back to doing nothing
with a smile and some comment
you white and shining like fresh paint
in the oversized onyx sunglasses
you of the smiles and the driving away
past peeling tenements
more peeling tenements
still more peeling tenements and liquor stores
these of the
spilled
liquids on pavement
of rot and chicken bones and car oil
congealed with flattened black gum stains
and weight of the charmless
dry-rot wood and piss mattress smell
and kids who talk of nothing but
who kicked who's ass
waiting for dirty buses on a weed-filled corner
you of the sunset
you of the shining car on the bridge
you toward computers and credit cards
and downtown shops
a glow like hope
and hope another product
like high-end bath gel
that smells of the sea—but not the real sea
stinking of kelp and heaving ships and longing—
no, the one in the mind
the one of salt and aquamarine and bright metallic beach pails
with cartoon crabs drawn on the side
clicking claws and playing on the cartoon beach
and you of the bleached smile and
forgetting already
where you've been

rise up

let me see if i got this right:

lies received as balm more than outrage
 earth seeming to fall apart and governments and religions
 paid to keep the masses in place and
capacity for the greatest realizations
 stuffed under concrete awnings and traffic signals
 winking at us from a distance

(or did i understand the question correctly?)

i ponder grocery list and headline
i examine the parched dirt and paved road
 gears and wires and trees
 growing with telephone poles on median strips
 air dirty and garbage piled up and yet

i rise up
i rise up

i have hope yet

is the race
 between the animal and the spirit
 a matter of time and biology, of some critical mass?
microcosm: in each brain
macrocosm: cf. the world
in love with jails and rules and defending a god
 until death
maybe death of the globe
all this brain size, and so many use it mainly to
 force superstitions
 imprison

and yet and yet
 there are flickers of hope in the world

go above the real
go above the news
go above the war
rise above
the
above the

(what?)
i saw
i watched i
 saw that internet footage
 of the guy beating up and mugging the 101-year-old woman
 in the doorway of her building
 in new york city
it can only horrify
 but it reminds me of how mass electronics work:

more and more we are like neighbors to each other
 and yet less and less—
peeping through an electronic hole
 whenever we want
 easy come easy go
 (talking of michelangelo)

and i stacks of paper
and we bills in windowed envelopes
and the laundry and the cat hair in endless cycles
and i log in i log off
and ads for rapid weight loss next to
 mortgage animations next to
 war coverage war justification war funding fighting war...

 and i rise up
 i rise up
 i rise
 up
 i breathe in new information
 i breathe out the hopeless
 i feel the news
 i sense the connection
 i take in the photographs
 the blogs the logs
 the back and forth tap-type-tapping
 on the machines that
 allow us to talk wider and faster
 than ever before
 i feel it
 so many of us now
 and maybe it's not intimacy
 but it isn't TV
 i am not passive
 in my experiences here

on the way home from the grocery store
i walked past a blind man on the corner
of grand and macarthur
and he did not know whether to walk
or stay
as the signal was silent
and so he stood there
not asking
and he looked as though he might ask me
but he didn't
and i didn't ask him either
and he stood there some more
as i walked away

and i thought:

 rise up now
 blind man
 summon your senses
 out of the great unsure
and walk across the street