

## The Natural Angle of Repose

I tried to tell you this, the night you left,  
 about flying from Honolulu to Hong Kong  
 when I was nine and watching for eleven hours  
 the sun rise again and again in the cabin window.  
 I asked my mother if morning would ever end.

In the hotel, as the lights of a Star Ferry boat  
 on its way to Kowloon glinted in the harbor,  
 she explained the International Dateline  
 and, leafing through my diary, said *here, this*  
*is the page you'll never fill*. Maybe that's when

it began – my belief that I could glide,  
 as if on glass ball bearings, from the past  
 directly into the future. A belief I held to,  
 more or less, until the summer you left: night  
 after night, mistaking for your harmonica

a neighbor's radio, I ran out the door, sure  
 I'd find you in the Pawleys Island hammock.  
 I pinned a color wheel above my desk and studied  
 the way blue turned into green and green  
 into yellow. The memory of the night we stood

in the lake and you combed out my damp hair –  
 like a photograph printed on cheap paper,  
 it blurred and faded, and on the color wheel  
 I found the exact yellow of its border. No longer  
 an easy glide: these days I approach the future

in much the way an insomniac sneaks up on night,

deliberately, warily, with awe. We've not met  
since. When I imagine running into you, now,  
I feel the syllables of hello, not farewell,  
hardening like smooth stones in my mouth.