

Lakes

A garden glove so far away
I have to look through the wrong end of a telescope.
Then I see
the thumb and forefinger are busted out
as if too many times
my father'd flashed the OK sign at me
across the roses he was dusting white
or over a bucket of withering dandelions.
Inside that glove
all motion stops, or did it blow away
on a wind that glances off the water
and sways a neighbor's dock
so rowboats bump and clang together
like a row of dusty bells.
A man in a sunfish
is waving to someone: me?
Across this man-made lake
some idiot dyed a windex-blue,
the windows are a dying glimpse of sky,
a great blue heron folds its long neck
and flaps away, then circles back
as if it doesn't matter
where it settles, every cattail clutter
looks the same
because a glinting jet trail's told
how late it is high over the roofs.
Nearby at the Barrington Jewel-Osco
a flock of teenage herring gulls
mistook the parking lot for open water
fifty miles from Lake Michigan . . .
hot afternoons, they soar above the grocery carts
on waves of rising air.
I ask them how can anyone

stand to live out here,
South Barrington, cul-de-sacs
like rootless lily pads
on a treeless lake, houses with circular drives
and double doors like funeral parlors.
On the heap of sand-and-pebble beach
I can turn and see
my parents' newish clapboard house
inside its paperweight,
so tiny I could pick it up in my hand
and peer in its windows,
or pull out all the straight pins
that hold it together or even
unravel the spider's silver spittle
gluing chimney brick to brick. Anything
could shake that house apart,
the tail-flick of a male robin,
the line of mud on the female's breast
as she thrusts and shapes
the cup of her nest.
And if the single garden glove
could tug at the Chinese elm
and earth and sky began to tip,
wouldn't the tree give way
with all its crumbly roots
and fall into the sky?
Robins flourish everlastingly in suburbs,
hopping the prolific grass,
stopping to peck, to lift and swallow,
foraging their shadows
then flying away with them.
And I suspect the lake
of dreaming too of flight,
overrunning its shores toward the Great Lake,
drowning every house on the way
to Lake Michigan,
where lately, fifteen miles offshore,
divers discovered a field of tree stumps
eighty-five feet deep,
traces of oak and ash trees that stood
eight thousand years ago

at the edge of what was then
a much smaller lake.
Maybe the point
of man-made lakes so far inland
is to give back a center.
Years ago my parents moved away,
or maybe the shore got turned around
and we were lost
from all those houses looking over the lake
waiting for trees
to come out of the water
and take them back.