WE ARE NOT THIEVES

A thesis submitted

to Kent State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Arts

by

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My baby is diaphanous

You ended in the damp morning.
I knew it was merely moments
ago you dropped out of your sky city
and fell at my doorstep,
feet forward, head to the heavens,
your gloss eyes waiting for me.

Did you pick my stoop because of its yellow
doors, inviting your free
feather spirit inside? My mother told me
about colors, yellow’s fire energy warming
your wandering soul.

Are your crow cousins cawing
for you, another sad song sliding through
the mist of morning? I’ll leave your
body sitting still, a skeleton no
longer a home for your song.
Shadow wings glide through the sun
color. You are my
responsibility now, a diaphanous baby
abandoned by her brethren overhead,
no looking back,
no last call.
A Lake View

Her mother called one day to say
she hadn’t heard from her brother
in two weeks. How strange he
hadn’t returned his mother’s call.
The call of obedience and obligation
and assurance every other Sunday.
He had been working a night shift at the docks, manning
the crane for the first time and it’s only natural
that a mother would want to know how her little boy is doing
against freshwater.
These directions are for planning purposes only

Little does Google maps know, Harbor Street sports a huge scar from the Bessmer Train System that feeds the hungry docks and you can’t simply drive your car 3.4 miles south from 554 Harbor Street until you hit Route 20, turn left and drive 1.9 miles to I-90.

She remembers David Javrey and thinks that maybe he used Google after he got laid off at the docks, 22 years of punching in and out and he drove his car over the railroad tracks and stopped. Maybe he was confused, checking the directions, thinking about the underpass a couple streets over, his whole world wrapped up around lakes, boats, but not trains. Maybe he saw the huge headlight, heard the horn blaring to move out of the way, and maybe his little Chevy Celebrity, light blue, had stalled, wouldn’t shift into gear and maybe it was an accident after all.

Sure David Jarvey should have known better, but if you’re born on the docks, raised on the docks, and never had to leave, how would you know that Harbor Street north was no longer connected to Harbor Street south? It was very dark that night and his car was very old and the shriek of the whistle can be deafening. When the train rolls by at night, the pulls of her dresser drawers rattle and sometimes she wakes.
My Childhood Home is a Meth Lab

Everyone knows the front porch is safe.

Everyone also knows you have to make a complete loop around the house to play the game.

And Beth is always It first.

Mostly because she’s fast.

And mostly because I say so.

The front door isn’t yellow anymore, but sits askew because he doesn’t care about clearing the safe zone, only erecting the 8 foot high privacy fence around the back yard, securing the comings and goings of business affairs not suited for sneakers pounding around the raspberry bushes for another lap home.
Herbaceous Perennials

I will pay you Tuesday, if you help me find

Quarantine today.

All sand has fled its surface moon, so the salt

Mounds rise higher. I’ll sled like it’s the eleventh

Month, the quietest month

And I’m in a sloping backyard, surrounded by

Fences and trees and woodsheds and peering

Neighbors who never dare.

I’d let them borrow my gloves, the right size

Next year, but no one asks. The salt is solid underneath

Bare feet, my toes collect pinches of grain, just

The right amount for tomato sauce, but too much

For pizzelles. I’ve never liked

This ancient cookie, except that it resembles

Snowflakes that fall from dark

Silent skies, growing larger and more intricate
Than the paper cutouts I made in fifth grade,

Ice crystals had more time to develop

Than I did cutting, because the recital was

Two days away and Father Roman wanted more


Everything is immeasurable. I am not allowed

To come down until the bleeding hearts

Are done flowering.
A Lake View

Her mother called one day to say the Light House is up for auction, the only one in Ohio and what a wonderful writing spot it would make for someone like her, out in the water, no obstructions to her North, no sounds but the birds.
The highest bid is only $39,000 and if she needed a co-signer her mother would consider.
Sand has built up between land and break wall that she could walk up to the Light House now, no boat needed and climb.
She could sit on her porch, the spine of the rocks protecting the marina, her Light House its ancient guardian, and fish for perch, pretend to see Canada on the clearest days and watch barges maneuver, inbound with limestone, outbound with coal.

Although her mother has never been inside, and the daily paper doesn’t say, the Light House must need some work. The spiral staircase stretches 80 feet, may be rusted, cracked or caved in, its steel walls in need of fresh white and black paint. The coast guard would tend to her 11-mile
range lamp, resting dormant for now on the rooftop.

She could make it an attraction, a Bed-and-Breakfast --

who wouldn’t want to spend a romantic weekend in a Light House motel, waking up to miles and miles of softly rolling water,

through one of four round windows? Of course, the winter would pose some problems for business, frozen water, freezing sprays, Lake Effect snow--

but things like this are secondary to her view of sea and sky,

secondary to the smell of freshwater, secondary to fresh perch for dinner every night,

frozen perch for dinner every night. And for her guests for breakfast? Perhaps that view could be enough.
Dear Human Sacrifice

I love the police officer directing traffic with matching gloves and ear muffs, iron forge Orange, his siren lights flashing when he waves me across Poplar.

What a gentleman, as I’d barely settled in a stop and our eyes matched,

For one moment, and his orange hand pointed at me, mitten-up, and pushed through the flurries of snow past his ear, telling me to go.
Ships With Holes Will Sink

She felt privileged, left with her father before the others, scaling into the hot bench seat of the truck, inventorying the necessities for a Saturday afternoon before she understood that things mattered, before she could bear the weight of decisions and feel real loss. She checked for lifejackets, two coolers, a bag her mother packed full of sunscreen and hotdogs thawing. Two plastic gas cans waited to be filled so the boat could glide across the water until dusk, the only reason to turn around.

She remembered the first summer she watched the fireworks from her lawn instead of the docks, having to look between trees and rooftops, her parents heavy with drinks behind her instead of beside, agreeing that selling the boat was the best thing, and this was a great view, no worries about driving back up the hill and the car overheating. The silence after each explosion felt heavier to her, a question of survival or not she didn’t know.
She made herself ride with her father after the boat was gone, mindless drives down to the marina, a just because, because they didn’t have lifejackets anymore, no boatshoes or sunscreen or all afternoon. She’d close her eyes, her father driving down the hill past all the other boats, imagine their empty dock with nothing tethered, remember the feeling of the uneven wood, nylon ropes, a sailor’s knot. And her father would drive, slowly, coasting as if on water, into water. It wouldn’t take them all at once, not at all, but slowly, like a fog encroaching and she would feel it on her ankles first, cool and familiar and she’d think to turn for the white and purple lifejacket, the new one her father picked out the past summer, their last summer, and she’d imagine buckling it securely across her chest when the windshield would give out, giving up but not floating away. Seaweed would have a firm attachment point to the steel of her father’s truck.
Third in Line

I saw every bump in her spine, tiny rolling hills like the skeletal structure at the D.C. museum of the Mammoth, its gigantic tusks jutting out above my head – I thought about our only family trip, wondering if this little boy driving a red fire truck around the JC Penny was also at the Natural History Museum about fifteen years ago, riding that same truck, screaming, that he was going to put the fire out.

His mother exhausted, I could tell by her frizzy hair settling just above her shoulders, skin taut over the bone. She had freckles, spilled across her nose and cheeks and I smelled milk as she rocked back on her heels, waiting to be rung out.

“I’m sorry he’s so loud,” she turned to me.

“I don’t care,” I replied. He was doing nothing to me.

Exhausted mom, second in line, sighed – I smelled milk again.

“You’re going to be a great mom.”

Because I didn’t care.
I suspect you can feel it

an inherited carry-on of roots
and knucklebones, a dedication

to drought, clay soil and a daughter
who still tends to her mother’s

vegetable garden in the dark.
There is always a time to send

her back down to the south,
missing the metropolis.

It’s not about aesthetics,
the delicate crawl across vocal cords,

swaying stalks in bleak, white
mornings, cold hands and cold skin --

it’s about kneading the soil
like warm risen baker’s bread,
before the rows of lettuce leaves
are littered with the radiation of the city

lights, too heavy for the moon.
Smuggling

She painted 74 ceramic angels
and worked hard to make everyone
look a little different. She thought
of her Christmas tree and of angels, too,
with blonde hair and no
ribbon hanging in beside blonde
hair and a red ribbon. Faces
peach and embalmed, robes every color
that Mr. Cox provided in Art Class
with the older kids, who didn’t
care for ceramic angels
with coffee colored hands with or with
out blush on their cheeks.

Mr. Cox donated all but one, because she
hid it in her geometry
notebook, not understanding the smear
paint would make on the wide ruled
pages. An amicable breakup between kiln
fire and paper pulp, an image of what could have been heavenly.
A Lake View

Her mother called one day to say her great grandparents’ house was officially on the market and how nice it would be if it were to stay in the family. A small brick Cape Cod Revival would be great for a single girl just starting out. She could rest assured the structure was well maintained, as well maintained as a home can be with two people living, complacent, don’t want change, set in their ways. Silly things like rooftops and water damage can be addressed over time.

The best part is the tomato garden. She could continue to plant tomatoes, the perfect place up against the back of the home near the kitchen window, the ideal combination of sun and shade and a breeze from Lake Erie.

She could walk down Sandusky Street, to the end of the road, and have the park all to herself a vacant place now. Kids would crawl up ladders of steel slides, gliding down and spinning around for another go, a race to the top.
Maybe she would prefer this quiet,

a perfect desert for her to disappear, be lost in waves,

and forget about the garden.
carry through

The sun is snug in the carriage of her arms, cradled like children in the cool of late summer, September clawing the back porch, seeping through screen doors and onto her skin. The last call of earth indicates the end of the harvest.

Funny how the mind erases the right things.
Shipment 0708

Dusk, lamps in the sky turn the coal on his hands transparent, unable to tell where his second skin begins, blending into the cracks of his palms, pulsating in the lifeline, underneath fingernails, and he regrets the overtime. He heard they began dredging new docks in Buffalo and wonders when the boats will migrate east and if they will take the birds.
Shipment 1213

There are few things in this world stronger than a promise kept and she has dinner ready when he crosses the threshold, boots dusty from the mornings’ delivery, or departure, his hands gray from coal. He brings her other treasures too, a shipyard office door knob, locust shells and ore pellets, fallen from stacks too high on boxcars. He doesn’t consider this stealing -- the ore is swept into the water by the newest hand every Friday, so it doesn’t pile up too high.
Shipment 0407

He heard stories about bloated bodies never surfacing, water gulping men whole. His eighteenth birthday brought on the discovery of smoke and its many colors. It billowed from stacks like spikes or bare tree trunks, ready to be pulled from the earth, now floating on top of tons of iron, impossible mathematics.
Shipment 0908

The shadow of what had been amputated spreads on the thirsty earth. The best place for lunch was under the arms of old machinery, a small picnic table he hand-painted with his seven-year-old one summer night, bubbles forming from humidity on the underside of the bench seat.
The night is only three deep breaths away, a train’s cry, clouds in gray and purple folds, he’s landlocked at six P.M., the water too unforgiving in shadows, swallowing boats that have purged their wares. His fish-colored eyes see only fog now, a haze of machines and seascape. He decides the cliffs look like gallows, a natural pull for ships to land and never leave.
There are 16,671 miles of shoreline, and he’s seen it all. Birds help to
guide his ships, singing or squawking of their trip to the land that
dockworkers will never see, the extra miles of migration, too dangerous to
venture except through beady eyes or beating wings. He imagines miles of
dockworkers will never see, the extra miles of migration, too dangerous to
venture except through beady eyes or beating wings. He imagines miles of
earth and water never touched by man’s hand and thinks of the scar he’s
already made here.
Joy Ride

You put a pin on my map
Marking a new place to find a car
To hot wire and joyride for at least

Forty miles north, and up,
Your action a symptom of the mean
Time, wondering why --

My bare feet rest on the dashboard
Of this ‘92 blue Chevy that we’ll borrow
For another twenty minutes,

Because we are not thieves.
Dear Charity Shoal

Consider the role of meteorites and the breadth of my own arms.

There’s a hunger in your core that’s never meant to be filled

punched through by the one who made you, when iron isotopes
unexpectedly met my earth and grew ridges.

Charity, I found you first. Just after you were born, I know.
The trees were fresh and young and small,

and I was just the same.

Your birth brought silence wider than your reach,
and when I arrived, your mother had vanished.

I’ll stay with you until we are swallowed whole
and know your rock flesh will disintegrate under water.
A Lake View

Her mother called one day to say the house for sale
on the shore line is in her price range.

You know, the one that moved twice already, from the beach
to the hillside, from the hillside to the cliff.

She knew, the back patio dropping off to the rocks
and white caps, everything underneath rolling or crashing or both.
That beach, the house’s first foundation, doesn’t exist anymore,
the land hugged too close by the water, swallowed completely
during the night. The original owners opened their eyes
one morning to find the kitchen filling with water,
lapping up from the basement. The house migrated
up the hill, a bluff landing just the right size
for this three bedroom, one bath ranch without
a basement now, just a small space
to throw leftovers. But the cost of a house
move forced original owners to leave

their once beach house, and a slew of passers-by
made it their new nest on the hillside, a perfect perch to gaze out
for an unobstructed lake view, the patio still somehow intact,
until it was time to move again.

Her mother doesn’t know who is selling the home, its last tenants,
or why they’re leaving, just that it would make a great place
for her, a retreat to her beach house, nesting
on the cliff. Family would be excited to visit, initially,

loving the idea of her transplant home, peering
off the edge, feeling some natural high as though it were life
or death to see where the water hit the earth, striking
up conversations over fresh-picked tomatoes about how someday soon

she’ll need to move the nomad home again.
Maybe they could prop her up for a while, drop cement anchors
into sand underneath and hope and know. She’ll eat another tomato slice and forget to mention the sloping in her back bedroom.
We Will Open the Earth

They couldn’t bury her for fourteen days because of the storm rolling down from the north, freezing rain

All over the cemetery a day before she died. Everything glossed over like Gray eyes, the ground grew so unforgiving her headstone,

With his name on it too, lay on its side, caution tape preserving her final Resting place, along a row of three others waiting for the ice to melt.

Mr. Hurley walked carefully over the ice to her six-foot plot before The machine bit into earth to make her bed. It was where she was meant

To be, where he brought a stalk of white lilies that withered in cold sprays Of ice and rain, the last thing he bought her the day the storm began

Arriving home to find her gone.
My Childhood Home is a Meth Lab

The third bedroom window looks over raspberry bushes
a great estate for Japanese beetles skeletonizing
my mother’s foliage. My small index finger would
launch their armor bodies on green aluminum
protecting our home from invasion.

Red phosphorus falls down green aluminum, the hum
of the beetles has traveled to the corner house now,
Mrs. Keaton has a beautiful strawberry grove
to feast on. The third bedroom is the best place
to hide leftovers, like red phosphorus, like me.

Sometimes the night glows, like raspberries
resurrecting, calling for the hum of the beetles
to return. The red light beats on green
aluminum like drums, or quiet hearts
imitating life, but nothing grows anymore.
Skippon Field

The trees creak like crafted
rocking chairs, lurching
up through mud sucking
loose tennis shoes,
hands searching for red-stitched
treasures of hometown
heroes.

Gravel roads cool with river
water underneath, left
over summer skin on the banks.

Wait thirty minutes after
lightning strikes to throw
another fast ball --
Don’t disconnect yourself
behind chain link fences,
a weak roar from mothers,
hard stares from fathers,
disapproving of your abandon
behind the stands, the water
more accepting of your
retired pitcher’s arm.
He closed his letters,

*To you & yours,*

but could never sign his name.

He licked the envelop tightly
closed, and scribbled letters
and numbers, a familiar
combination of street names
and postal codes.

No return address
required because he knew if there was,
he would have accumulated red-stamped,

*Return to Sender,*
on his coffee table.

Alcohol made him a truer man,
but true men aren’t the best men
and sometimes you just need that money
to buy liquor and baby clothes.
Heat Lightning

You tried to explain heat lightning
one night, holding a cigarette
in one hand, beer in the other, your
chin pointed up in the heat of
the dark night, dead in the summer,
eyes to the sky.

We waltzed on opposite ends of the front
lawn, father and daughter, in grass
curled up around my bare ankles,
soft in the humidity rolling out of the air,
and we knew that rain was coming.

*It’s really just lightning*, you tell me,
and I’m silent; that dance we do as you
lead and I observe, a careful concoction of
tell and absorb.
The clouds over our home light up, silently,
in soft gray and purple, and you point
with your cigarette.

*Another one*, you say,
and I’m silent,

waiting for the rumble of rain.
**Seagull is a Layperson’s Term**

The fur of her winter coat reminds her of the feathers of seagulls.

How do they keep warm in the winter months, the few that remain, sitting low and round, nesting their thin bodies on ice burgs that float on the lake.

The best way to access the gap, the space between break wall rocks snaking to the Light House, protecting the marina from the sometimes carelessness of the water, was a secret she heard from the gulls

Whispers that boat ramps freeze first, shallow and committed.

Children don’t tell their mothers of adventures like this, and if she gets wet again she knows to stop at her grandparents’ first, a declaration of new discoveries.

The gulls never speak of the gap, a hungry water never freezing, but every little girl knew the ice by the ramps would hold bodies, stretching to perch on the Light House porch, to see clear waters too deep to freeze,

plowed over by heavy boats with business at the docks.

She walks with her arms straight out at her sides, a new rule she adapted last year, after a plunge into the ice. She had two sharp bruises,
pecks of the ice on her arms, at her elbows, discolored sick skin her mother never noticed. The gulls kept her secret, but listened to her tell of water pulling her legs, knowing its strength when it’s cold.
**Depths of the Outscape**

I wasn’t watching you,

but I couldn’t swim, either.

You left the security

of our sand castle. I watched behind

two towers, moat, and leftover

plastic red buckets perfectly

sculpting my fortress.

What did you see? What

Monster drew you to water?

The lull of the waves, the alluring

splash and swallow.

There are things I can protect

you from, sunburns and seaweed

but I can’t watch as you run

into the waves, the water’s

responsibility now.
Harbor Street Disappears in a Morning Fog Floating off Lake Erie

It’s the best hill to bike down, and the hardest hill to get back up.
Maybe she’s not meant to, gliding down the gritty cement
to the rows of boats and piles of iron ore, limestone like table salt.
Bodies nestle in the harbor, the place where earth and break
wall stone mesh together, and there, a perfect view to the top of the hill,
abandon store fronts another layer between land or sea or blue sky.

There’s a gray uncontrollable after at the hill’s bottom. The white and black
light house shines barely visible in hazy mornings, guiding ships
to dock, everything mechanical, rehearsed. She can see the ghosts
feeling their way through the fog, bodies blending into the air,
moving mechanical arms and gears, pulling levers and cranes.
There is no gridlock during shipping season anymore,
no busy hands in the early morning.

There are no ever-since’s or till-then’s at the bottom of the hill,
hands off the handle bars since she was seven, and sometimes,
she feels like she’ll fall into the water, grow gills like a fish and breathe
deep, a different kind of fresh water filling her.
The Mason Jar

I believe
you should die in the same place
where you found your heart
clutched in the young, rough
hands of the Peterson boy who lived
on top of the hill near the tracks,
working at his father’s garage,
smoothing weather-worn wood
to dig this business out of the ground.
You should meet him for lunch
at noon
standing outside the gate with a basket
and a smile and two ham and cheese sandwiches,
both for him, because you’re too busy staring
at the smooth, stained skin
of the boy who lives on the hill where he’s
keeping your heart in a jar on
his nightstand, accepting its responsibilities
but ignoring its worth.
I Prefer You

We are on a stark beach.
You with your feet in the sand,
me with my head in the dark.

You took a Polaroid of the foam
ocean, and told me to find three
pearls in the oysters,

though, you argued, fresh
water mollusks are the most
valuable. Women like pearl earrings

no matter what kind. I thought of that
Dutch painter, his Girl with the Pearl
Earring, and wondered if you saw

me looking back at you like that,
over my left shoulder, unsure,
my head in the fog.
Fog, thick like smoke spitting from
factory stacks in the outskirts
of a town we abandoned, long

before abandoned, but still buzzing.
Buzzing to attract the pesky moths.
You pluck out and pick off

the ones that don’t think for themselves,
at least that’s what you told me:
Think for yourself. Leave with me.

You stole a photo of me with your
Instant camera, and it spit out a
Polaroid you whipped in your hand.

Could you see my face? Was I just like
that seventeenth century Dutch girl,
red lips parted, eye gazing behind me

wondering what you’d ask next.
Smoke in Your Eyes

All sunsets in Georgia are the same.

You wanted proof that smears of purple
and blush were mirrored night
after night, but I took only one picture
because one was enough for me.

But you need tangible things
you can smear in your hands,
so I found you Mary Ever Virgin on the face
of toast I bought on eBay for $9.95
plus shipping, from Mexico,
and hid it in a loaf for the geese.

Side-by-side we stood
on weatherworn wood of a boat ramp
wondering if this gaggle of feathers
feasting on white Wonder bread
knew they were missing a mate,
a pretty smear on asphalt, two miles
from the boardwalk.
Billowing Isn’t the Right Word

Who knew smoke came in so many colors? The train lurching, the stacks exhaling, his own mouth in a fine, fine O --

He is just a businessman and a storyteller, a selfmade historian of the better times, when word of mouth beat pen and paper and punching of black keys, documenting rupture dynamics and the shallow-focus of earth recreating new places for footprints on faultlines because sometimes he finds himself caught in the crossroads and needs a place to run.
Acorn Trees and Holy Water

Mass was held outside in the summer, under the shade of huge oak trees, perpetually guilty hearts underneath that she didn’t understand fanning themselves with missalettes and flyers for another Youth Group carwash or pancake breakfast.

They didn’t gather outside for the ambiance, to appreciate nature while begging for forgiveness for being mean to their older sisters, disobeying parents, or mumbling obscenities to bosses at work but because the air conditioning bill was staggering this past July and we, as a Holy Church, just can’t afford another utility bill like this one, and though God does provide, General Electric says we’re past due, again, and its expected to be a hot, hot August.

Father says we’ll still meet God in God’s house, but she was told God’s House was the Church, so maybe the lawn of Sister Ambrosi Olympia’s house is God’s summerhome, quite spacious, airy, though she’d expect God to have a better view of the lake, not barred by so many trees, other homes, and the noise of motorists passing by.

Those majestic oaks, however, made the ground hard to maneuver, littered in the summer with dozens, perhaps hundreds of little acorns. It’s difficult to balance
your wooden folding chair, stamped on the back Saint Francis Xavier Cabrini Church and School on the ground when the feet are rolling unsteady over tiny acorns, too resilient to be crushed under your weight. Getting to the chairs with your walker and orthopedic shoes proved challenging. Clutch your rosary, straight from the Holy Land made out of olive wood, mutter a quiet Hail Mary under your breath you don’t trip on your way to communion.

That is, however, if you can even figure out where the lines to receive Christ’s body and blood begin and end. This Holy Sacrament can become a bit of a clusterfuck on the lawn of God’s summerhome, every man for himself as though there is a limited supply of tiny wafers that have miraculously turned holy two minutes ago, when she knows that there are crates of this baked bread in the sacristy.

There are no aisles, no rows, no sense of order, and if she loses sight of her mother’s yellow sundress in the blur of tree trunks and human trunks, she’ll turn around and return to her folding chair, wait for the electric piano to start, and wish they were back inside, because she misses the rumble of the organ in her chest.
B Dock

She sold the boat and we never
went to B Dock again.

She couldn’t justify the sun
burns anymore,

or overpriced lifejackets,

new boat shoes, or sandy

passengers’ seats. She

blames it on her middle
girl, sun stroke every Saturday,
burnt hot dogs on the beach,

and wading through seaweed
to find lost sunglasses.

The best pictures,

back drop of the Lake Erie shore

line, show mothers with floppy hats

and sun bleached daughters,

enjoying the best view of the fireworks

on the soft rocking of the top deck, not
knowing this would be the last
time they’d experience this connection.
Heal Her

The first bloom of the day lilies
was reason enough to make love in the kitchen
against the estate sale stove
a treasure chest oven full of century
old sheet music, matchsticks
and pie crust crumbs.

She doesn’t bother with the lawn chairs
lining the tree lawn to watch a marching
band and fire engines. She has the best view,
the quietest view,
from her kitchen slop sink.

There is a rumble underneath
her ribcage that she’ll blame on the noon
train carving through town,
a consistency she can set her pocket
watch to even if there’s nothing
to keep time for.
The architect found it first

I.

In between the layer of street and sky
knowing this marked the time when things started to matter.
It was the night her watch stopped.
The night her body made a pretty smear between green and concrete.
The night the architect began to number days
and count dark skies.
This is where ghosts are born
    and raised
    and sent on their way.
This is where her body hides.

II.

You recognized me by my eyes,
concave, chiaroscuro –
I used to be your fortress but now
I lay a silent thing. I didn’t choose
the size of my hands but I did change
the length of your breath, a little bit
lighter now, not fogging the stained glass window of the oldest
church in our hometown, lined by gold leaf that’s
mostly gone, from thieves and mothers
and any other desperate hand.

III.

I swallowed your love whole when I was adrift.