

“Grabbing at Beauty”

The retarded man in the post office
asked for the stamps with pictures of the sea on
them—

he didn't say ocean, or water;
His head stayed cocked to the side as he talked,
as he stared beyond the heads of people.

I didn't know that later that night,
I would stare at the moon with my head tilted,
trying to see a trace of what he sees,
knowing that I couldn't.

The moon held its expected place in the sky,
the sidewalks cracked no differently that night—
I called my friend Kathy and took her out
for a birthday dinner three months late,
told her I missed her as I gulped
the champagne, wanting to speed everything up.
Outside, the streets carried on as if
the normal were occurring, as if we weren't
rushing at each other, grabbing at beauty,
as if the sea never existed at all.

We went to Frankie's bar, where the band
played “Johnny B. Goode” slow and even,
just like it should never be played.