What I thought was the squeaking of the season’s first bats was just a rust-gut van idling outside the store.
What I thought was the future was just more of the same.
Constantly I feel stationary and in a state of undress like a fountain statue, keeping watch over nothing but a hoard of coins I can’t touch. What was it I wanted, dirty water full of presidents flattened in profile?
If I am free to leave, then why this net of contrails and powerplant exhaust? Why this list of beached whales, and our need to name a thing even as it disappears?
Inside each whale is shopping carts, bales of fishing line, an entire McDonald’s play place worth of plastic.
Inside my wallet is a license that says I have learned how to move through the world without letting it touch me.
Mostly I do not feel small
and when I do I am
watching the news.
I am watching the storms come in,
or waiting for the ballots
to be counted, or waiting
for the bodies to be counted.
Neither of my senators
have emptied their voice
mailboxes in months,
so I send them faxes, and in doing so
imagine a fax machine
kicking to life, chirring
suddenly in some office,
hulking in its ancientness
like an insect exoskeleton
with one song left inside of it.
It reminds me of Dial-Up,
the sound of which, though grating, 
I never found obnoxious

because it meant the world 
was letting me in, heavy invisible gates

hinging open right in my home. 
Nowadays I dread the internet

because it is full of news, 
other people’s tragedies—

the internet a kicked dandelion, 
each story a seed falling

back to earth. Mostly I don’t 
feel small and when I do

I am reading about the NRA 
or the latest pipeline disaster, or wondering

what my partner’s mother, 
who has Parkinson’s, will do

if the ACA is repealed. In Ft. Walton 
their house burned down
because a single mouse
chewed through a wire in the wall.

They stood on the lawn,
watching flames metastasize

through the structure of their lives.
The problem with the idea

of a phoenix is the bird
eventually has to come back

out of the ashes.
Oh, to make a joyful noise—
but I was trying to recall
the first thing I ever forgot,

which wasn’t God’s voice,
though I did eventually lose that.
And it wasn’t a teddy bear

with a wind-up music box
sewn into its chest.
If you want proof

of love’s ragged effects
on the body, I can show you
how little of that bear’s fake fur

remains after all my hugging.
And the music box just clicks anymore,
like a stovetop igniter

in a church kitchen on a weekday.
On weekdays, a bar in the last town
I lived offered complimentary shots

of whatever liquor they were trying
to get rid of, and they served them
in the same diminutive plastic glasses
with which I consumed a thousand communions. That liquor was almost never worth drinking.

but I was taught to try everything, at least once. Which is impossible, of course, and necessary,

if we want to leave our old forms behind—metamorphosed, like the frogs who lived in the slough behind my old apartment. They sang so loud during storms you couldn’t hear the rain.

You could almost believe it was their voices falling over you, filling your clothes, your hair.

Someone better make sure the stove is off. Someone better check the pantry and make sure if God shows up on Sunday we’ll have enough glasses to hold him.