

ARIANE BOLDUC

Mastectomy

Longing, we say, because desire is full of endless distances.

—Robert Hass

I've lost *Praise*—

the missing green spine startles
in its absence, and that absence recalls the absent
hands

that once held the book
at a café on Hoover St., in the heart—
if we can claim one—of L.A.,
where a man swiped his palm over his head
and shrugged
before handing the book back to me,
lighting a cigarette and staring off
into the distant light

fading

into dusk. Even the endless distances end,
when we don't even long for the time
to return. I think of the places
where his hand, *any* hand, used to be.
Of Georgia O'Keeffe,
the photos that Stieglitz took of her
before the operation, before the mistress
and the pictures of her posed in the same positions.
Of O'Keeffe, triggered
into new space:

harsh,

but her own, down to the bleached bones,
arid in red dirt. Give me that
loss: the shape of me in shadow.

That

I would like to lose, to scissor myself from my feet
and write something separate
from feeling
all this snow on my tongue.

Listen,

it's simple. *Praise* is no longer on the shelf
where it should be: pressed tightly
against (the naked right breast, the split-
figure on the cover of) *The End of Beauty*.