It happened here. RVs and summer homes.
   Salal clotting by the river.
A pair of black lungs’ rotting petals
   on the back of a pack of Belmont Milds
half-buried in the reeds. If I try,
   I can crack the highway’s asphalt,
lift it East across the valley, where it was
   when tarpaper shacks once rose
like mushrooms from the mud
   along the water—then deeper,
straighter, raked by winter wind
   into heaps of etched glass,
broken lines in which I might find
   a pair of sunken eyes, the grooves
of a forehead, slope of a nose,
   my grandmother leaning close
to crease a sheet of washi into a heart,
   a crane, a little frog; the little whisky
on my grandfather’s breath the time
   he showed me how to swing a bat,
the way its momentum should point
   past home; or my mother
sobbing on the phone after I left mine in anger
   at nineteen. Like water
carried in cupped hands, all this was gone
   before I noticed. It persists
as motion rehearsed into muscle.
   I’m alone and tired of trying
to summon years from the valley’s blue-green
   shadows, the white-tailed deer
silent as sentries among the trees.
   Dear grandparents, dear parents, dear
derelict feeling: whose beginning
   is written on the plaque outside
the visitor’s center? Which futures
   still flicker like the embers
constellating the end
of a half-extinguished cigarette?