I saw the decapitated sunflower of it
from an arcade parking lot
off Route 110.
My two kids were in there
giddy, buzzing—
while my mother shoved tokens
into jittery fists. I stepped out—
my head was killing. I could no longer take
the artificial clinking of ticket dispensers
and mock jackpots
over stained carpet floors. Days before,
I’d been *let go*: a phrase
so passive, so incidental and plain
like the slightest ease
of fingers from string. I moved
past Laser Tag, a few kids drowning
in a pit of plastic balls,
and that greased prize counter
like an exhibit for madness. Outside
the August light had dimmed
to purple ash. The air felt cooler and rimmed
in stillness like a spacecraft
over Long Island’s turnpikes and malls.
I thought of my children
backlit by tilt-screens,
wholly thrilled
to be present and rich.
Then suddenly I rose
up up and away—a small, hollow orb
into darkening skies.