

Ghost Trees

Pointe Aux Chênes, L.A.

Toward season's end when butterfly trawls spill
purple-eyed shrimp, and a cool north wind scatters
mosquitoes across the bay—moon's running,

crabs are fat, blowfish surface with hardheads
and flounder like minnows to a lantern—under
a giant moon like this you can see ghost trees,

a stark statuary across the marsh. You'd think some
grave digger tended these lacy roots, trimmed the grass,
and whitewashed the skin of their contorted branches.

(If live oaks walked, you might guess these looked back
and were quick limed to their lonely, twisted spots.)
As if through a peephole frame, you see the past—

a ridge of green smoke, the vestige of fresh
water through the *cheniere*—dissolve in the haze.
Salt has blanched the bark stone-smooth—no olive-

coloured leaves hanging like lures—the ghost trees hold
only the memory of solid ground, their coiled roots
braid nothing but brackish water and air. Storms

can't challenge this spectre—frozen in agony
or ecstasy, who knows which, and what does it matter
when their shining bodies keep forking the darkness?

Bully Camp Road

Every mangled, rusty hood reads, "Close!"
In white grease print, as if something might
Escape—like a mad dog through a screen door

Or Freon-charged air from a struggling
Window unit in Cocodrie mid-
July—from this junkyard of car shells

Turtle-stacked along a sagging chain-link fence.
A curl-tip of blackberry springs up
From a chrome gear shift, commanding

What's left of this pick-up's interior:
Seat rails, speaker wires, steering column,
A Frito's bag and a few flakes of glass

From the mosaic bubble of punched-
Out windshield. Its bottle-green leaves against
The hollowed dash make it look a little

Lost, a little upstream. Don't think *hope*, for
God's sake. Think *vulnerable*. Think of that day
In kindergarten, telling the teacher—

She so pleased with fifteen etched Christmas cards—
Mama got them from the back of some drawer.
Think how complicated *truth* became.

Most of these jalopies are picked clean
To their Detroit bones: not a rear-view
To be had, not a tail-light to follow

Down a swamp road. And this road is a long
One, all caked dust and oyster shells, past
The house of a boy who set off a shot-

Gun under his head, so that his tongue,
I'm sure, was the first to go, a collage
Of rote recitals, blunders, and dreams.

Echoes endure, chalky dust quiets,
Almost settles, like this passenger cage,
Razed to a mound of glinting red powder.