

FIVE PRAYERS TO BE SAID UPON DEPARTURE

—FOR RICH

With us it was always the ocean—
its rhythm the backdrop of all we did.
So how did I not know the day you died,
bent as I was toward the sea,
handing your story to whichever gods
listen? And then the morning after:
on the beach each bit of coral
was shaped like a brain.
The shells were shards
of a heart—I wished to hold
each to my ear. So the boats go out,
the boats come in, and if my soul
were not so moored to this world
I would ride the taste of salt
far from the shore—you, the night bird
beside the hull, just clearing the wake.
Somewhere, someone is playing Cohen's
Hallelujah, drinking Jameson
neat. Tonight, I'll light a candle,
set it afloat. The moon pulls the tide
even when there is no light to see.