

UPON WAKING, IN A HUSH

To be honest, the sea frightened me at first:
the expanse, sure, but also its restlessness
—come now, then go ... the lift and fall—and how
totally into its restlessness some had, I was told,
been swept. Undertow, they call that. A name
I like and which can, I think, well describe what
it is to love another person. The unseen pull.
The way one only knows it's happening, if
they ever do, once it's already happened.
And so, for years, not stupidly, I did not swim
—if I'm frightened, shouldn't I be?
Waking with a hand around my ribs—a fair hand,
familiar—which way can I assume it is pulling?
Not rescue.

Nor desertion.

What's with the pillow?
you asked, *all night you had it over your face.*
Sometimes, maybe, to practice breathlessness
is, in some ancient and childish way, to avoid
the real drowning. *They were too bright,* I said,
through the window, the stars.