

## A W H A L E ' S H E A R T

There's a sadness that smells  
like rose water. It's my father's  
hands on the receiver, his voice, how his own  
father just can't find the words  
anymore. *If you give him time*, he says, like a slow  
climb, the single-stroke engine sputtering, spilling  
oil; falling behind. *When you're deaf, sometimes  
you just stop* listening; I understand, how  
sometimes it snows inside the skull; how much  
like wind, like nothing. How lovely these  
fingerless gloves sewn; how inevitable. My  
grandfather once said you can hear  
a whale's heart from over two miles  
away. How much sound must dissipate  
through the wavering quiet; the medium. How  
large the ventricles must be.  
How, in the old country, his family distilled  
the petals pulled from their rose  
garden. As drink, or drug, or perfume  
applied to his own father's ears each  
night, before prayers; how the burns came  
in a blacksmith's fire; how small the scar  
left, how easy to see then  
what was lost.