

U.S. Navy Photo: “Dawn Landing on Wake Island”

Ruth Salter

All nature’s knowledge
Is to stay unknowing—
Ours, to confess confusion:
—Fyodor Tyutchev

I knew it was dawn
With the sun blurring whitely
Through the gray clouds,
But I’m glad someone wrote that.
The light and the words make a bridge
Across the water to the sand.

In this place there is no wind:
A big flag on the landing craft hangs straight down.
Silhouette men hold their stick guns
Above the sea and wade to shore.

I don’t know the story of Wake.
I don’t know these men,
But I know other soldiers with other stories.

They're all about the place
Where it's good to fight
Where time unmakes itself
And death is awake.
Somewhere I can't go.

This beach looks like many beaches.
These small waves could be anywhere,
And the clouds, too, with the sun
Erasing the sky and spilling down.
But this is nowhere.

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