sandhill cranes appear on the horizon  
like a suggestion, black shapes  
high up, foreshortened,  
and then the long, outstretched necks,  
legs trailing behind like reins  
come loose from many hands,  
and farther down the road, three come  
up from the marsh,  
red heads forward and level,  
their purpose forgotten  
under the weight of necessity, and they  
are like children governed  
by a forgotten language, and  
they are like lovers racing  
through the fog of the dunes  
to the lakeshore, untouched  
by all but each other and sand,  
and they are like kings  
who do not see the desperate  
eyes of their subjects who stand waving  
shovel and ax at the sky,  
and they are filled with all  
that rushes past in the wind,  
and they make the air part  
to serve them, the great  
push of their bodies,  
their hard, unyielding faces.

In Jackson, Michigan,