If the birds, startled out of the grass
and vanishing into the great invisibility
of sky, are, as I have suspected, the bodies
our memories wear when they flash
out of hiding, only to vanish again, then
they will not remain long enough
to be attached to language or story.
They will remain ghosts or half-ghosts,
imagined or all too real, tickling the soft edges
of our sleep, harbingers of the unseen
life we carry and refuse to inventory
or analyze. Just after sunset,
I drove past a lake, its bone-calm surface
holding just enough of the fallen sun
that the surface glowed bright as pollen,
a stillness deceptive enough
to remind me how little in this world
truly holds. Invisible from where I sat,
insects were spinning busy routines
just over the water’s surface; just below,
fish darted like quick birds, like thoughts
that pull us from the shallows of sleep
to see one another, familiar shape of a face
we might lift a hand, too heavy
to ever mistake for a wing, and touch before
sliding again under the smooth surface
of sleep. Even the bowl of fruit arranged
by a painter is not still, the sugars
of each peach and banana sizzling, flesh going
brown and soft while the brush struggles
to hold it forever at its ripest blush,
the blush we still see in one another
mornings as we wake, free of memory,
wordless, waiting to be filled by our lives.