

Detour

Before we left our mapped route to take in
Yosemite, I dreamed that visit
in grey and white like Ansel Adams' photography—
those Titanic slabs of granite I'd seen
in books. The road simply extended
to one such pale bulk and ended.
We all got out of our dark, shiny car
confused. With their arms entwined,
the three girls looked oddly the same age and size,
the boys tramped at once back to a dropoff:
grey pines so far below
they looked like grass sod.

Perhaps it was Ansel's tin moon
that made me look up to the cliff top
above the car: I was not startled
to see my youngest there in shorts
and knee socks—which he never wore—
and how he got suddenly to the top
I didn't wonder; he was simply there and already
I knew he would fall: hurling down
toward the car with a face
that held no surprise, only apology.
It was over in a moment, but we could not
find his body—no vegetation to hold him.

In the heat of California's drought
some of us voted *no* to the detour.
We drove into the dull greens and dying grass
of Yosemite, into the thin moonlight
that would touch us before we could leave,
and I wondered which waiting bodies among us
were stained as wholly
by memories of places we have never been.

—Dixie Partridge