

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/4

Joseph Murphy
My Slender Oars

I want to pitch out my oddly-shaped parts,
But they keep out-reaching me;
Out-living clarity.

One piece wills its way up, slips past.

Others follow, press forward,
Bruising my thoughts;
Having their way
With the curve of my wrist.

I dream of a beach at dawn;
Fire still smoldering within a circle of stone.

For a moment, the blare subsides,
But soon I'm rubbed raw
By doubt.

Outside, the rain has stopped; street lights illuminate
What the age considers real.

But I'm bowing to another half-lived night.

I want to pitch these sheered bolts
Before the rug comes loose;
The sand hardens.

I'm working, pulling, hoping
Relief will follow,
But the past keeps unfurling,
Jamming my slender oars
Against the stone.