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## No Such Thing as Under Tow

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## *No Such Thing as Undertow*

*(for my sister Melinda)*

One hour after lunch it's safe  
to think of the sea, but twenty years  
after I found you huddled  
beneath the surf,  
the hard ocean in your throat,  
nothing's felt safe.

My arms did not wait  
to be asked, reaching through  
the ceiling of water,  
my hands not pranking  
that time, pulling you by the hair  
up and back into summer,  
our sunburns resuming.

What was it that wanted you?  
Some mornings it has wanted me:  
first move out of bed  
I'm already walking the plank,  
the plank daylong and drooping  
further with every step.

Then I call.

You say there's no such thing  
as undertow. Your voice waving  
to me from land, instructing:  
swim parallel to shore,  
you're just snarled in a current  
and tired. Relax, keep going,  
take the next open wave in.

*Walter Pavlich*