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 KYLE MINOR
 

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*MY SLEEP WAS LIKE A LONG SWIM*

And the water the sound of Heidi Marcincak  
 Her old lady voice  
 Reciting *eins, zwei, drei, vier,*  
*Fünf, sechs, sieben, acht,*  
*Neun, zehn,* and we with our yellow brushes and dustpans  
 Jumping jacks and catechisms  
 Backs ramrod straight in our schoolchairs  
 The sticker of the purple feet  
 She placed on my lapel the day she said  
*I know you I've known you all my life*  
*You are every stupid boy I've ever met*  
*And never will you be anything, Kyle Minor*  
*Never, ever, mark my words, I've lived*  
*Under the Communists in East Germany*  
*And I've lived under the godless West*  
*And I'm proud to be an American*  
*But not when I see your messy desk*  
*Your crayons and pencils and erasers*  
*I say in disarray*  
*I say in a state of shame like what you bring me*  
 And then she pushed me outside the classroom  
 Pressed my body against the air conditioning unit  
 My father installed and serviced  
 Lifted my body with her bony hands  
 Said, *You are and never have been any good*  
*And God does not love a child like you must be*  
 It was then I knew she had surely fled the Iron Curtain  
 The Berlin Wall, the guards with their guns  
 Braved the river as they said carrying her elderly father  
 On her back, her elderly mother, then, her aunt,  
 Three long swims down a river I don't know which river  
 Three swims back and forth under threat of bullet

*Sou'wester*

And drowning and capture  
Risking it all her hero's way  
So she could make her way to West Palm Beach, Florida  
And ruin the lives of fifth grade boys  
Every time I swim up toward wakefulness  
Even though she's dead now I hear her