

ABBY CHEW

*OOLIE'S VISIT FURTHER WEST*

In the cracked bed of Jack's Defeat Creek where you found that dogfish skeleton  
with its wide-open aching jaws so chockfull of teeth

In the junkyard where you found the hubcap bent in half and shining

In the black-dawn when the baby first neck-twists  
toward the red waiting light

In the Johnson grass growing in the shadow cast  
by the culvert over Scotty's mangled car

Oolie threaded his bird-bear-body through the gap between night and morning.

He said the mourner's prayer.  
His crow wings filtered the light—  
his bear claws raked rows in the land.

I've seen him in Iowa just  
once, when he flew over the river  
landed in the band shell  
walked out toward the oxbow.  
He didn't touch me.  
I waited there with my dog. She pressed  
her shoulder against my knee.  
Oolie walked with his wings  
arced high and his paws up.  
He did not touch me. He did not—