

DOUG RAMSPECK

Self-Portrait as Firefly

I dreamed as a child of offering every longing
like a red couch bobbing in a river
or a hawk perching like an obelisk on a fence post
or a winter cloud becoming a paper mask.
There is no world but the worm in the head,
no memory but the lovesick night, the fever
piercing skin. Sometimes I lay on summer grass
and watched inconsolable fireflies offering their slow strobe,
some metaphysical blinking like the handkerchiefs
of the dead waved out the windows of hearses.
I didn't want to grow up. I wanted my eyes to close
into the strict vocabulary of stasis, some mother tongue
like the exhale of a breath this dream
of gathering night's hours into cupped palms,
or raising them in a bucket from a well.