

LOT'S WIFE

--after the sculpture by Kiki Smith

Then salt erupted
through me, bursting like seedpods,
a hissing vapor.

Now I say my gaze
will be last to go. It is
the lifetime that's passed

I struggle to see,
not this road pocked with thermal
brine, a husband's hand

forcing me forward.
I strain to hear our vanished
fountain's music fall

but I've no magic
to turn mirage to marriage
again. Here I stand,

an eroded wife,
utterly lacking in grace.
Drop by drop, grain by

relentless grain, salt
trickles down my corroded
breasts and thighs. The wind's

leathery lips skim
my skin. I have no names now—
sister, mother, friend

all sucked into this
high hot air. I've heard of tribes
to the south who lave

and bathe, oil and wrap
their beloveds' bones before
re-interring them

in the earth. Each year,
they enact this sweet respect.
Yet dare I call it

sweet? My bones crumble
and fade. Once I believed in
the sweetness of salt.

Now all I know is its burn,
its millions of tiny flames.