

THE EXTINCT FRESH WATER MUSSELS OF THE DETROIT RIVER  
*for Kathrynne (1951—2010)*

These are gone: *the deer-toe maple leaf, the fat mucket, the snuffbox, the rainbow shell*. Here, still,

the rusted manhole cover and the chipping paint,  
the lights and the arches of the elegant bridge,

all coated no doubt then in ice. Here the breeze,  
here the freighters but not the car, quiet as it's kept

it's no secret the keys were left in the ignition.  
Don't look back, something may be gaining on you.

Absence makes the fond heart wander, the mind  
meander, the river to swallow its flow –

the self-same river, the self-same self, even the one  
that knew better, the self that knew better

than to pick up a phony ten-dollar bill folded  
to disguise some evangelical come-hither.

Come hither, said the bridge. I will save you, said the cold.

*Little earwig mussel, pimpleback, purple wartyback,  
northern riffle shell*, something lacy yet along the rim.

In R. Sintemi's "Running Fox" (Germany, 1944)  
it's as if the dry-point animal in outline is floating

on the surface of a river, the water swelling upward  
on the verge of breaking up its lines—

*did you float, dear bat-out-of-hell, dear gnashing teeth—*  
the pointed ears, the flowing tail outlined on water not water,

on paper not paper, on the not-water before there only was  
water where we are skimming now as over a great uncertainty,

a mirroring surface that hides as much as it reveals.

No more *rayed bean, pink heel-splitter, giant pig-toe*.  
Oh *fragile paper shell*--where was the artist in 1944?

What did he do in 1939? You would have wanted to know.