

Promises

If you've ever been the victim of a bad loan,
you understand the purple loosestrife, the lamprey,
the round goby, and the quagga mussel.
The Great Lakes choke on these crafty intruders,
sucked into the ballast tanks of cargo vessels,
ferried across the Atlantic and flushed
into the fresh blue bodies that envelop Michigan.
Miniature aquatic assault squadrons,
no predator in sight, clogging intake pipes
of power plants, throttling the life from local
ecosystems. Here, in the Midwest, these stories
are buried beneath news of credit freezes,
corporate bailouts, and housing foreclosures.
Steve, who purchased a two-bedroom ranch
under the silver mist of promises and bad ideas.
Rebecca, who swallowed a second mortgage
to fund her daughter's voyage
to the distant shores of academia
in return for a handshake and a life vest
made of lead. Wait, here it comes again.
One more freighter on the horizon, its hull,
guaranteed to satisfy, stocked with all we need.
Iron ore, grain, coal, precious oils. And below?
Something like a contract's fine print, pale,
too faint to read, slick and wiggling.