

## The Word Dragon

*For A. F. Moritz*

And when I woke again the earth was underfoot  
and the sky had ceased to be the sky,  
it was cowering behind a large rock.  
*The rock isn't a rock, it is a stone* the Word Dragon said,  
so the sky (it was the sky, in fact)  
had been hiding behind a stone.  
Behind the stone I glimpsed the ocean.  
Behind the ocean, the tropical island where I grew up,  
the memory of those I loved, my mother and father  
in the backyard reclining on lawn furniture,  
the ridiculous hats they wore,  
the wood fence torn down in later years,  
replaced by an aluminum one,  
my brothers and sisters playing with the water hose  
beneath the date and palm trees,  
the birds and paper wasps on about their business,  
a birdbath brimming with cold, clean water,  
the house where I learned to tie laces.

Annoyed he once flew through something so cowardly,  
the Word Dragon grabbed the sky by the throat  
and drop kicked it heavenward, his wings  
an angry unfurling of letters forming complex words  
and phrases, his scaly neck convulsing an opinion,  
his vertebrae a list of connecting words,  
his snout a W, his feet capital I's as were his eyes,  
his sex forming the word 'need.'  
The Word Dragon said,  
*The earth is the earth, it always was and always will be.*

I laid my head down in the field and when I woke  
the earth was still the earth, and the sky was above me,  
and curled in a foetal position, a tropical island  
hiding behind something round, big,  
something of the earth but different somehow.  
*A boulder?* I asked.  
And the Word Dragon smiled and said, Yes.  
I could smell the ocean behind it.