

POETRY

Ripple Rock

Shawn P. Bailey

This is where my mind wanders,
Behind this desk, bathed in soft
Monitor light. This is where
I levitate, oscillate, and glide
On five plastic wheels, a pneumatic column,
Lumbar support and everything.
This is where I pour yesterday's lukewarm
Water bottle on my mother-in-law's tongue.
This is where I push buttons
And pile up symbols and consider
The crust of the earth.
This is where my mind
Wanders: How it is thin,
Not a walnut shell or even a cantaloupe rind
But an apple peel,
Three to five miles thick under
Oceans, continents, under twenty-five,
Thin and pregnant and implacable,
Always sending up new mountains,
Earthquakes and volcanoes,
Always pulling high places down.
This is where I concentrate.
Maybe I'm reading something
Or taking a call. I reach
For the rock on the edge
Of my desk, deep red,
The size of a cheap paperback,
Something I picked up last summer
Hiking a shale bowl with my head down,
A bucktoothed puzzle piece, a million
Particles of dust that came to rest
On the floor of an ancient sea.
My hand runs over the ripples
And shallow waves pull me back.