

ROBIN CHAPMAN

Waves and Beaches

—for W. Bascom

To watch the light traveling along the ocean crests,
the shadows criss-crossing in troughs,
and imagine motion traveling though time;
to translate motion to depth of water, current, wave—
to infer from these an island, seven thousand miles away:
cool respite for the mind
assigned to predict how the waves
from the H-bomb test would travel—
first the light that blinds, the x-rays that burn,
then the shock of the blast—then the deafening sound.
the island Elugelab, gone, a spreading plume—
Eniwetok atoll a torn wound—and if landslide,
the tsunami you computed beginning
its thousands of miles.