

KEVIN COUTURE

I'D LIKE TO THINK BIRDS

You're on the rug in Jacob's room,
your bed since the bunk is long gone.
The moon, the window, the wallpaper animals,
and you at my feet, having visions.

I wonder what you see in your dream
such an old, old dog.
I'd like to think rabbits, fields of tall grass.
I'd like to think birds.

But maybe it's the day we got you
and Jacob followed your every move.
Grabbed your fur, your nose, your soft brown tail.
We knew then and there you'd decided
he was going to be your boy.

Or it could be the picnic at the beach you're seeing.
The shared sandwich, the tug-o-war bull kelp.
Backseat-dozing the long drive home,
lolling across one another like brothers.
Weightless and silent. Uncomplicated as driftwood.

Or maybe, weeks before we realized,
when you licked Jacob's skin, head to toe.
Over and over and over.
Oh, how we laughed at your antics,
at your ridiculous animal frustration.

And later you wouldn't leave his side,
not for anything.

As though you could actually see it,
the sickness inside him.

Oiling over his bones like an octopus.

The dream ends and you stare up at me.

I look out the window instead.

Then we both turn and find the empty place
where a child's bed should be.

You wag your tail, once.

Lick the tips of my bare toes.

Your way of saying

I know, I know. I miss him too.