

JOHN BARTON

A NEAR ANTIPODES

Half a world away, your voice no longer fits
the quiet of my rooms, solitude not dislodged
despite your call. Tropic words damp my ear
though it feels cool and early where you are.

The quiet of my rooms: solitude not dislodged
with dusk tugging on grey threadbare gloves.
Though it feels cool and early where you are
half a city away, a nearer friend drives closer

with dusk tugging on grey threadbare gloves.
Nightly she takes in your mail, turns on a light.
Half a city away, a nearer friend drives closer
without anxiety, the black ice scarved in snow.

Nightly she takes in your mail, turns on a light.
Half a block away, your son stays at a cousin's
without anxiety, the black ice scarved in snow
while we talk. You slip into white linen shorts.

Half a block away, your son stays at a cousin's.
Down the road, footprints silt in, seldom cross.
While we talk you slip into white linen shorts.
I rub unambiguous salt stains from my boots.

Down the road, footprints silt in, seldom cross.
Half an hour away, and already there's no trace.
I rub unambiguous salt stains from my boots
the river I walked along collapsing into floes of ice.

Half an hour away, and already there's no trace
the wind a dial tone snagged among leafless oaks
the river I walked along collapsing into floes of ice
ahead of me, shattering the mirror winter held up.

The wind a dial tone snagged among leafless oaks.
Half the time we talk, and the language tumbles
ahead of me, shattering the mirror winter held up
while you shave an invisible angle of your jaw.

Half the time we talk, and the language tumbles
despite your call. Tropic words damp my ear
while you shave an invisible angle of your jaw.
Half a world away, your voice no longer fits.