The first one was in Michigan and I loved him
like I was digging in a foreign land and he was
the ruin I came to discover. Michigan is as cold
as people imagine and when I remember him now
he is leaned against one of those gaudy American
cars, big as boats, and all but his face is lost
in layers. This was a campus full of kids in knickers
and baby blue sweaters who, when they laughed, shielded
their mouths with mittened hands. I longed to uncover
flesh the same way I longed to uncover earth in a place
where winter long outstayed its welcome. I wanted
my beauty, whatever it was, held up to my blind eye
and described; I thought loving was the same as
sifting down through ash to find Pompeii. In Michigan
there were layers of snow and layers of clothing
and with that first boy it was as if I kept undressing
until I was naked but I found a way, that young, to take
off more. Down in the dirt of each other every clue we
uncovered was not enough. The snow did not stop falling
and now, a decade later, there is the shape of him outlined
again and again until he is larger but less detailed:
a relic from the ancient landscape explaining me.