You came to me first as dawn hauled up on ropes of apricot above the blackened wall of white pine.
You came from the south, from the highest places, came down the mountain running.
You were announced by the crows, the shrill calls of alarm from the uppermost branches.
You opened your throats in a high harsh singing.
I didn’t know what you were and rose trembling from the deck chair, stood breathless and still where the woods surrounded me, gathered dark and darker as if to stall the light.
You came down, two of you: one young and red-bright the other old, rust streaked with gray.
You pretended not to know me and lay down beneath a small granite ledge, lay on the fallen needles, licking light into your fur.
You came to me because I have wanted you.
You came though I had asked for nothing, because I was full as a river at flood tide with sadness.
You came to me, rested and then rose, first one, then the other, and ran downhill into the morning.
You who assumed the guise of foxes, come again as you did that morning on the mountainside.
And wasn’t that you who came last summer as whale boiling up from the waters of Jeffries Shoal?

Wasn’t it you who came in September as wood duck over the Stoddard marshes, who flew parallel to my car window?
Come to me again as moose invisible on the night road. Come the way deer steal across the field at dusk.

Come as raccoon, as coyote. Come carrying your burden of blood and shadow—

come joyous and light with song, come in sleep, in the unexpected reaches of the day. I am waiting.

Come red-tailed or black-winged; come fluked and finned, come clawed and taloned,

renew my breath, come full of the mystery I am only beginning to know.