

It Was a Golden Age of Monsters

The sickle moon bobs like a child's paper boat
between silhouettes of paper mountains. I am watching

steam swell off a herd of bison in a black and white
book about the American West. Too young to read

much into what I'm reading. The world is all image,
unfinished rail track and Douglas-fir, level saw cuts, rings

tracing back to the beginning. The dozen spears projecting
from a felled paper beast are replaced the next chapter

by rifles and iron and the same falling. Tomorrow
it will snow and my father will drive me down

to the hospital again. Snowflakes crazing
about our headlights. Paper moon between

the mountains. I will be thinking about bison,
blood on the page, the pillow. The road

that curls home always seems to erase itself.
And the steam coming off it, frail as breath.

—from *Skin Memory*
Backwaters Prize, University of Nebraska Press