I admit that, more than once,
I've pointed to the sky,
said "That's where your grandpapa
is now . . . with the angels."
Years ago, uncles, aunts, did the same to me.
It's a family heirloom
handed down through the generations.
The explanation must look like
something from a picture book . . .
clear blue sky, maybe a puffy cloud
or two for a chaise lounge,
and a broad sun beaming down
like God's smile.
If I didn't have these standby stories,
then death would be a stammer of the tongue,
I'd speak to the child like I do to myself . . .
he's been called to God
but what that means I do not know.
The more inquisitive ask,
"If he's in heaven in the sky,
then who's that lying in the coffin
at the undertakers?"
That’s when my philosophy
feels like the body,
stiff and speechless.
My faith can raise it from the dead
but not my words.
“Your mother’s looking for you,”
I tell them, as I move toward the safety
of the grown-up mourners.
We know that really isn’t anyone
who’s lying there.
But I can’t explain nothing to a child.
I can only point to the sky,
its nearest equivalent.