

Older Brother

THOMAS A. WEST, JR.

As a child I wondered
what the lobster saw in the last second
before it flopped twisting into boiling
water, before its claws
stopped knocking against the pot
like a boy come to life in his own coffin,
before the little legs ceased
to kick.

My much older brother said, listen
to the screams, a sound like steam
escaping from a kettle.
I had heard that sound before in the darkest
closet of the night
and woke to realize it was my own voice.
I had almost drowned in a dream.

Years later my brother said other things
into his whiskey
like when a man is decapitated, his eyes see
the executioner's feet, his ears hear
the roar of the tsunami mob, his nose smells
the fear in his sweat and his mouth tastes
brass before the portals in his brain
click shut.

Long following his death, I heard he dug holes
in the back yard at home, trying to find his real self,
and raise it up to sunlight and truth.