**The Near-Desert**

Pepper Trail

In the near-desert I have spent time among the puddled lakes,

each gathered, shallow, in the shadow of a butte, under the long run of a rim.

Their waters are white, white as milk. They do not reflect the sky.

It is easy to imagine them gone, smooth white water to cracked white mud.

Easy, because I have seen it, the vanishing, winter into summer.

For years I gave myself no long looks in the mirror, did not consider

myself in that way. But now, suddenly old, there is a new fascination,

or dread. I study the topography revealed, more each day,

the faults, the cracks. It is easy to imagine me gone.

Easy, because I have seen it.