

Real waters

(Gas Works, Whiting, IN 2004)

Sitting in my Toyota
under the lights of our refineries,

I listen to the dark run-off pools,
where gulls huddle
on the oily rainbow of banks,

and there are the holding tanks,
white as bizarre mushrooms
lit by some grace from the night.

I remember the sound of what I thought
were the real waters of my youth,

sea-streams that baptized the earth
where we worked. We would go

down to the luxury of surf,
and wait for the whispers that all was not *usage*.

And I remember the felt-gravity,
pulling us out to our cradles,
rocking us in salt under cliffs.

Waters of this real pool,
in your break against quarries,
in your dark, starless history,

I hear the tides three thousand
miles away, and ask if you once felt
the gravity of your Great Lake.

Could you whisper through these girders,
just once, of our baptisms?

Or do you find in these holding tanks
you serve,
the wonders of our usefulness,

as we gather in the night
to watch the oily Aurora Borealis
of your mud?

-William K. Buckley