

*Measuring the Length of Grief by the Length of a River*

In the sovereignty of night, I relive  
the days of being your father,  
I court the urge of sliding into a dream,  
indulging that fantasy of fatherhood—

listening to your heartbeat  
I once woke up the world with my excitement.  
And if this yearning could now wake you up,  
once you wake, the world you find will be a bit more

impaired than the one you left,  
and me swallowed in the great rust of mourning,  
where everybody whose lives you've touched  
has earplugs to shut down themselves

from one another.  
Child, my mother says your body shortens  
the distance between God and I— a bridge

sprawled from my doorstep into paradise. Perhaps it's true.  
Every day I weep in her presence  
she presses those words into every corner  
of my ears until a smile appears on my face.

And then she crumbles  
into her own tears as if the smile on my face  
was a big wound that scars my attempts at happiness.  
Each time I think about you now, I go into the bathroom

to lean against the mirror and cry, most times  
the mirror feels like your body,  
sometimes like a ghost or a light of illusion  
along a forsaken river. Sometimes I think

your memory is a sky crumbling onto its own  
clouds, and the blue sky reminds me of my mother  
and her fiend strength. I am rooted in  
what ruptures, a ghost looking for its body

flayed in internal voyage, a circular track  
around a masjid. At the entrance of night,  
your body is a bright artifact  
hanging on the minaret.