

Egret

The morning after the betrayal
I picked my way to the estuary,
lifting my black-leggined limbs
as if they belonged to some other creature,
bending the bony knuckles of my knees
like an egret after lugworms.
The tide was out a mile and then
I was neck-deep in the smear
of red mud, wellies thrown
to the quicksand like sacrifices.
The sanderlings scuttled and the turnstones
chattered and nothing was left unsaid
except the truth of course
and of course there was no estuary
no whimbrel or curlew or red mud or salt
no water to carry things along
just the betrayal jutting from my mouth
like a concrete jetty
and no, I wouldn't believe me either
but I did see an egret that day
almost definitely
she stood in the rubble
of the building site behind our home
her oxbow neck the curve of an *R*
like she was trying to spell something out.