

# ADAM CLAY

## A Memory Before Memory

*whether I can prove it or not*  
—William Olsen

It would be a lie for anyone to say  
there is no desire whatsoever to return  
to that place, that moment, where light first touched  
the skin, swaddled  
outside of a hospital or in the back-seat  
of a car on the freeway, the dull  
orange light of the defroster filling the car  
as if it were the only light  
in the world. Job cursed that light  
asking *Let darkness and the shadow of death stain*  
that day as if a stain could make it blend  
with a world gone wrong.  
I said all of these things—and more—to a river  
where all of the fish  
had become female, where a heron  
did not turn its head to look at me.