

Old Boots

He pulls the right one
off, its lace made in some
Vietnamese sweatshop,

fourteen eyelets though he uses only
six, and 200 joule impact
for the steel toecaps,

which must be good he thought
when he saw them years ago
in the Army & Navy, guessing

what it meant, but you don't find those shops
so often now,
and yes they're cracked but not

split and the tongue is
seawater bleached,
all those places he walks,

the margins, over limestone
razors, through
pools red with corallina,

difficult because a continent
is drowned here
and a continent begins,

and he has the polish,
a rind left in the tin

of Carr & Day & Martin,

he should take
greater care, and he pulls
the left one off,

always difficult the left,
yes, in greater need,
the left, a mosaic of scars, but the sole

on both sufficient when he
considers the punishment
of the journeys he makes,

the difficult vocabulary
that rock always uses
and him a learner,

always a learner practicing
sandstone's syllables, its quartzite
verbs, and he tips the right

and watches a pyramid
of sand build suddenly
and from the left the same,

perfect he thinks, in their way,
and now he smacks
the heels upon the floor,

and then both soles, and there's more
than he ever thought,
those grains collected

on his expeditions
up to the edge, but next
he sweeps them all away,

dark as violets, white as brass
and wonders as he knows he must
how much might fill an hourglass?